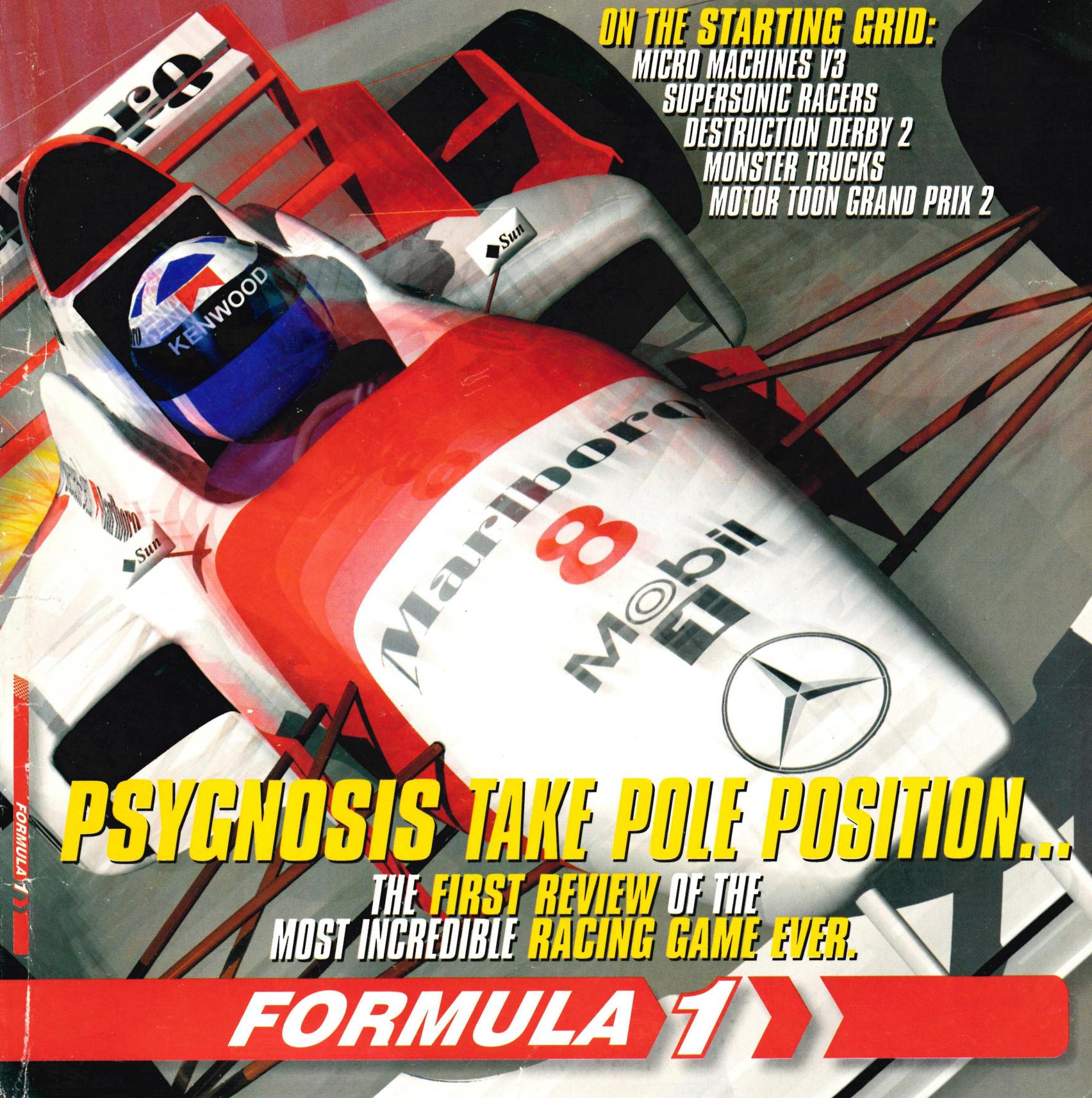


PLAYSTATION PLUS

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE SONY PLAYSTATION AND MORE...

ON THE STARTING GRID:

MICRO MACHINES V3
SUPersonic RacERS
DESTRUCTION DERBY 2
MONSTER TRUCKS
MOTOR TOON GRAND PRIX 2



PSYGNOSIS TAKE POLE POSITION...

THE FIRST REVIEW OF THE
MOST INCREDIBLE RACING GAME EVER.

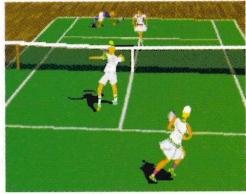
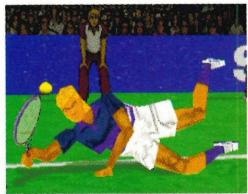
FORMULA 1 >>



SAMPRAS
EXTREME
TENNIS™



PC
CD-ROM



128mph bullet-serves in yer face - that's what it's all about. Get an extreme work out with Sampras Extreme, the all-action tennis arcade game that looks real, sounds real, and feels real because it is real ...

8 world stadiums, 22 intelligent motion-captured opponents, mathematically-accurate ball dynamics, fully sampled speech, sound fx and crowd atmospherics, camera action tracking, and optimized viewpoints combine to deliver exhausting games, sets and matches.

Yeah, you can be a spectator, but if you want to experience how Sampras' opponents really feel, there's only one way to find out: Sampras Extreme, smashing into your living room this summer.

The smash, hit.

**"The most realistic tennis game ever,
and an absolute joy to play." 93%**

GamePro magazine

**"State of the art... An innovative and
frighteningly realistic game"**

TOTAL SPORT magazine

Sportsmaster
WORLD CLASS PLAYERS

It's real.

Codemasters

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TOMB RAIDER: 24

Lara Croft is on a quest to find the powerful Scion, lost somewhere in the ancient world. But someone else wants to stop her...

DESTRUCTION DERBY 2: 28

Ever wanted to smash your neighbour's car up because of his alarm? Now's your chance to expunge your aggression here instead.

MICRO MACHINES V3: 32

Tiny people in tiny motor cars, zooming across giant landscapes, such as your dining table or bed spread.

PANDEMOMIUM! 36

So far PlayStation platformers have seemed a bit visually tame. Now, here comes *Pandemonium!* Is this the shape of things to come?

BROKEN SWORD: 40

Fully animated cutscenes bring to life an interactive adventure through the French underworld – and mythological powers.

SUPersonic RACING: 44

More racing thrills, with a bunch of teamsters who wouldn't look out of place in a Saturday morning cartoon show.

STARWINDER: 46

A racing game with a difference – the track is a section of tunnels linking planets in the far reaches of outer space.

ANDRETTI RACING: 48

Join the Andretti brothers Mario, Jeff and Michael and take a drive on some of the windiest Indy and Stock tracks around.

BUBBLE BOBBLE: 50

Join Bob and Bob as they try to save their happy, idyllic friends and village from the evil of Baron Von Blubba.

COVER STORY

FORMULA 1: 14

As the racing season reaches its climax Psygnosis prepares to roll its latest baby, *Formula 1*, out of the pit lane. Officially endorsed by the Formula 1 governing body, Psygnosis' stunning racer looks set to take pole position when it's released this September, overtaking *Ridge Racer Revolution* et al for a place on the winner's podium. With the hype already reaching boiling point, *PlayStation Plus* is the first to take what can only be described as the most authentic racing game ever for a spin.



REGULARS

NEWS: 6

Virgin announce a bonanza of more than thirty new games, while we take a look at the industry's top selling CDs

WORDS & PICTURES: 96

A new regular column looking at the latest books, comics, videos and CDs with the merest hint of a gaming connection.

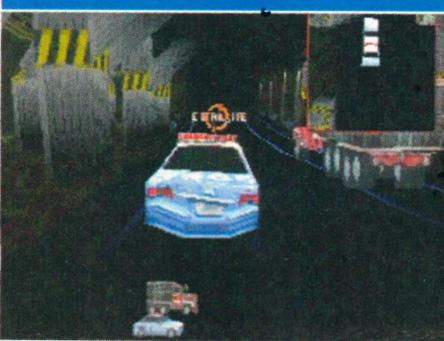
TIPS: 98

An in-depth look at moves for *Toshinden 2*, as well as a walk-through of Origin's intergalactic spectacular *Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger*.

PLUS POINTS: 112

Your views on the good ship PlayStation.

DIE HARD TRILOGY



SUPersonic RACERS



FEATURES

REVIEWS

CHILD'S PLAY?: 52

With the recent price drop, many people are wondering just who are Song aiming the PlayStation at? For just on a year now, it seems to have been the 16 to 25 year olds. But now the younger section of the market can afford a machine. So, will we be seeing a drop in quality of software as well as the price of hardware?

CALLING ALL THE HEROES: 104

History is littered with heroes, some are legends, others just memories from days gone by. Then there are game heroes, most of whom don't have rippling muscles and, by all accounts, are misfits who got lucky. Well, there's a new kid on the block, following in the footsteps of Mario and Sonic here comes Crash Bandicoot, and on the eve of his public debut *PlayStation Plus* scrutinises the marsupial icon and asks the question, "What makes a good game hero?"

FORMULA 1: 14

The leading contender in this summer's set of racing games revs up, bringing the motoring season to an impressive close.

DIE HARD TRILOGY: 62

McLean fights off the bad guys in a tower block, around the airport and on the streets of New York. Yippee kai-yay!

OLYMPIC GAMES: ATLANTA '96: 74

As Olympic fever hots up (will it top Euro '96 fever?), US Gold unveil their game to rival Konami's *International Track and Field*.

NAMCO MUSEUM VOLUME III: 80

Even more blasts from the past pop-pickers, as Ms PACMAN leads the latest pack. Keep an eye out for those Galaxians.

TOP GUN: FIRE AT WILL: 82

Turn your clocks back to 1987 and relive the famous Tom Cruise movie strapped into your own top secret jet.

NBA SLAM 'N' JAM: 34

More dunkin', more duckin', more slammin' more... er... jammin'. Yup, it's another basketball game for the PlayStation.

PRO PINBALL - THE WEB: 86

You flip the little silver ball up, it hits things, you gain points and, when you least expect it, the ball escapes. Darn it!

STARFIGHTER 3000: 88

Not only do you have to blow up everything in sight and dock with your Mothership, but you're expected to save the galaxy too!

MOTOR TOON GRAND PRIX 2: 90

A racing game with a difference. Is it aimed at kids or adults who want to be kids? Every toon in town is back, and then some!

GUNSHIP: 92

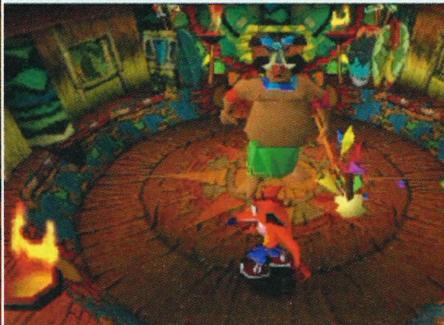
You have a helicopter, missiles, even a co-pilot. All you need now is skill to use all of these things.

COMPETITION

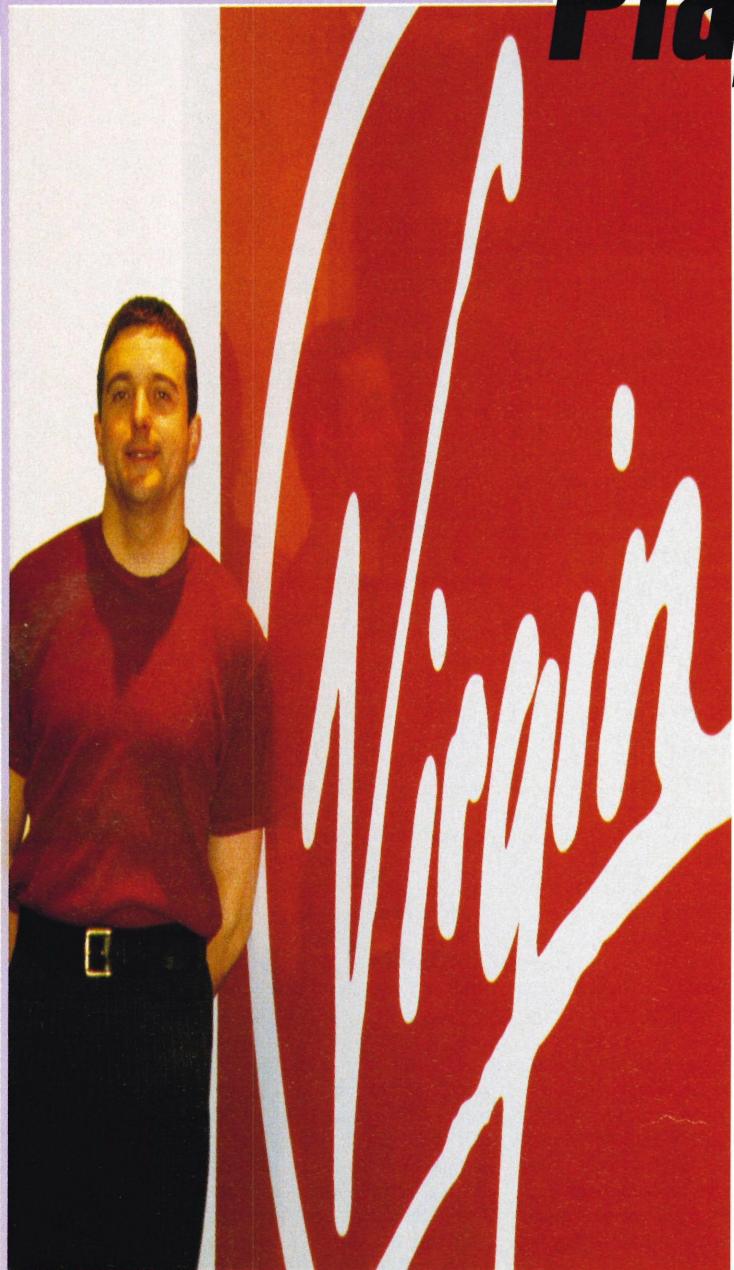
PRIMAL RAGE: 12

The people at Warner Interactive are so pleased with their *Primal Rage* conversion, that they have given us one of the original arcade machines to give away.

CALLING ALL THE HEROES



NEWS



Virgin Announce PlayStation Release Bonanza

30 NEW TITLES BEFORE END OF YEAR...

Affirming Virgin Interactive's plans for PlayStation domination, the Kensington-based company has unveiled its line up for the Sony machine for next year, and are planning over thirty PlayStation releases — and this includes a number of acquisitions signed after their impressive E3 showing. Sean Brennan, Virgin's Deputy Managing Director, was typically bullish about their release schedule, stating: "We've proved over the last few years with the PC that we're more than capable of breaking new ground technology whilst always stressing gameplay values. We hope to achieve the same with the PlayStation."

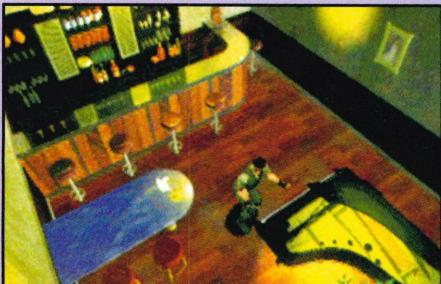
In all, Virgin's releases number thirty-three, with titles appearing from their in-house development team, their US wing, and past affiliates such as Lucasarts, Vic Tokai and Capcom, while newer signings such as Anco and JVC are also boosting the numbers. With *Resident Evil* now confirmed for release on August 9th, Virgin are keen to be seen as developers of quality titles, and following the release of Capcom's brilliant gorefest (rated 94% in Issue 9), September should see old stalwarts such as *Earthworm Jim 2*, and *Tilt* released alongside a new cricket game from Anco. Then there is the *Skeleton Warriors* licence from Playmates, with up to three or four more titles adorned with the Virgin label in some description released each month. "The important aspect to stress is not the actual quantity of releases we have for the PlayStation, but the quality and variety," offered Brennan. And even if the age-old problem of product slippage rears its familiar head, it seems that Virgin could still have over twenty titles on to the shelves between now and this time next year.

Virgin are also keen to stress that the titles announced won't be the full list either, and it is believed that Lucasarts and Westwood have new titles up their sleeves which could see release within the twelve month period. Even so, with Cryo, Looking Glass, Trilobyte, and Amazing Studios already under their wing the preparatory work of licensing some of the world's greatest development talents is starting to pay off. Here at *PlayStation Plus*, we feel Virgin's commitment to the PlayStation is brilliant news, as the number of titles announced is a third larger than their Saturn list, and will also stand the machine in good stead against the inevitable onslaught of the Nintendo 64, which is now supposed to launch on these shores in April 1997.

And now, that list in full:

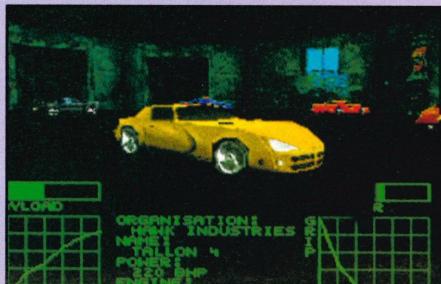
Resident Evil

Gore, gristle and gallons of red blood. Well, sort of. A game that really does make you jump at the most unexpected moments — and the first true horror story on the PlayStation. Awarded 94% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 9.



Impact Racing

Some love it, some hate it, but there's no denying its position as one of the fastest racing games on the PlayStation. And even better than most, it's best in the two-player link-up mode. Awarded 82% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 7.



Jumping Flash 2

More hi-jinks for the rabbit and his bizarre chum the-clown-that-no-one-understands-what-he-is-for. This time around, the game is far more satisfying, making for a good platform game — a rarity on the PlayStation. Awarded 88% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 9.



11TH HOUR:

Conversion of a much-delayed PC project. A graphically-stunning adventure with the player unravelling a ghostly plot via a series of puzzles.

4-4-2:

Arc Developments are producing this latest addition to the footy fold, but little is known of it apart from an early 1997 release date is hoped for.

AGENT ARMSTRONG:

Billed as 'Commando in 3D', a heroic soldier runs a shoot 'em up gauntlet within a play area that allows him to run in and out of the screen. A summer '97 release.

BALLBLAZER CHAMPIONS:

Lucasarts dip into their back catalogue to recreate one of the greatest Atari 800 games of all time. The conversion is looking superb, and should appear in time for Christmas.

**BLACK DAWN:**

From the people who brought you *Agile Warrior*, Blackops, comes a two-player sequel using the same engine but sitting the player in a polygon-based helicopter.

**BUBBLE BOBBLE 2:**

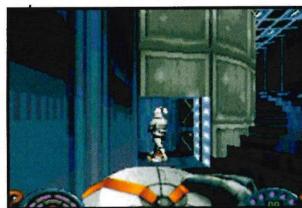
Developed by East Point Software, *Bubble Bobble 2* invites four players to blow bubbles through a number of scrolling platform levels. Said to incorporate features of all three *Bubble Bobble* game.

CRICKET:

Another Anco title, but again as of yet there is no code to see. Set to go head-to-head with a forthcoming EA cricket game.

DARK FORCES:

Eagerly awaited *Star Wars* meets *Doom* variant from Lucasarts. Pencilled in for an October

**DEADLY SKIES:**

JVC's odd mixture of *Afterburner* with 'special moves' has been delayed heavily, and won't take off until May.

**DEAD SPACE:**

Nothing is known of this Radical Entertainment title. Set to hit in September '97.

EARTH MONSTER:

Developed by Paradox, but very much an unknown quantity.

EARTHWORM JIM 2:

Playmates' conversion of the Shiny 16bit classic. See separate story.

**FEAR THE NIGHT:**

An arcade/adventure created by Virgin US. No release date given.

GRID RUN:

An update of an old coin-op, with the player attempting to avoid a series of monsters across a series of pathways.

HEART OF DARKNESS

Amazing Studio's stunning platform-cum-arcade/adventure is now scheduled to steal the show in the summer of '97.

HERC'S ADVENTURES:

Oddball cartoon adventure from Lucasarts. Another January release to capture all that Christmas money.

HOOPS 2:

Sequel to a never-released street basketball game. Developed by Virgin US having scrapped the old code.

HYPER MATCH REAL TENNIS:

JVC tennis game imported from Human. See separate story.

**IMPACT RACING:**

A release at last for the JVC shoot 'n' racer effort. Reviewed in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 7 - 82%.

**KICK OFF '96:**

Currently scheduled for a Christmas '96 release, *Kick Off '96* is an update of Anco's classic Amiga kick around. Little is known at the time of writing.

LANDS OF LORE II:

A graphically-stunning looking real-time adventure from the team at Westwood Studios.

MANIC KARTS:

A sequel to the successful *Super Karts* on the PC. *Motor Toon*-style action across a series of tortuous tracks.

NANOTEK WARRIOR:

Revealed at E3, and a fast-paced 3D blaster. Developed by Tetragon and due to hit the shelves in the middle of January.

PLAYER MANAGER 2:

A much-touted Anco title. Offers the player the chance to steer the team of their choice through to championship glory. A possible October release.

POWERPLAY HOCKEY '96:

The second PlayStation NHL licence resembles EA's past Megadrive hits. A September release is being mooted.

POWERPLAY HOCKEY '97:

Yep, a sequel to *Powerplay '96*. As if we needed to tell you.

RAW PURSUIT:

Unknown JVC offering, said to be breaking in May.

REBEL ASSAULT 2:

The second Lucasarts title, with the player stepping into the shoes of a rookie rebel pilot in a series of shoot 'em up levels.

ROCKMAN X 3:

Part of the on-going Capcom deal, with the aging platform hero updated for a PlayStation outing. Japanese version reviewed in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 9 - 81%.

SKELETON WARRIORS:

Playmates' game of the kids' cartoon. See separate story.

**SPOT GOES TO HOLLYWOOD:**

Spot has been on his way to La-La Land for over a year now, but Virgin's US team are hoping he'll get there for Christmas this year - just in time for a trip to Maceys.

TILT:

Another hugely-delayed title. *Tilt* is Virgin's venture into the realm of pinball games, and features a number of pre-rendered tables of varying games and designs. Now due for a late September release.

TREASURES OF THE DEEP:

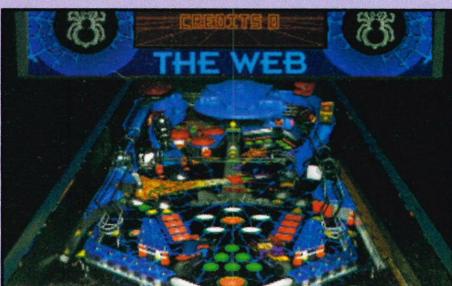
Another Blackops title, with development set to begin as soon as *Black Dawn* is complete, with Virgin hoping to release PAL code in June '97.

VICTORY BOXING:

JVC pugilism. See separate story.

Pro Pinball - The Web

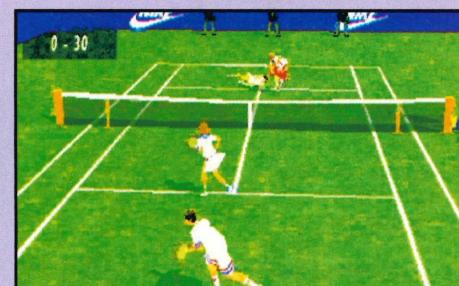
Okay, so there's very little complicated about bashing a silver ball around a table top and lighting lights, but nothing else comes near this for playability and cool graphics. And that ball really moves like the real thing. Awarded 93% in this issue of *PlayStation Plus*.

**Namco Museum Vol 1**

Love 'em or loathe 'em, the retro games are here. This has had more hold-ups than a Group 4 security van, but one look at *PAC-MAN* and joust and just feel that nostalgia come flooding back. Awarded 84% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 4.

**Sampras Extreme Tennis**

Okay, so the man himself got knocked out embarrassingly early by some dodgy guy from *The X Files* (think about it) but that shouldn't stop this tennis sim doing well in the charts. Awarded 89% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 10.

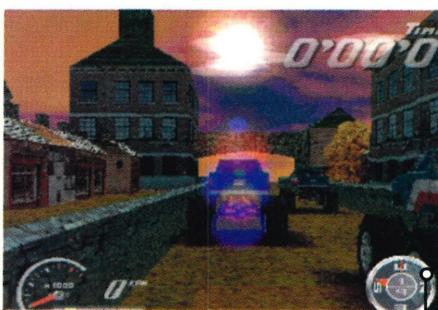


Sony Considering Budget Games

Sony of Japan have followed up the reduction in the PlayStation's cost by slashing the price of a number of games for the machine. *Arc the Lad*, *Ridge Racer*, and *Raiden Project* were the first games to be reduced to a Yen comparable sub-£20 price, and *Boxer's Road*, *Ace Combat*, and *Toshinden* are set to follow – and Sony UK are said to be preparing to do the same on these shores for Christmas as another chance to undermine the Nintendo 64 which has now seen its UK release delayed until April of next year. Sony UK have yet to confirm the rumours of PAL budget software, yet the company has recently reduced the cost of duplicating game CDs, and this is being linked to the possibility of generally cheaper software – although we must state that new releases will most likely stay at the £40-45 mark. With Sony selling 30,000 new machines when the price of the PlayStation was reduced to £199 – and Sega rushing to follow – the software is another carrot to win over new adopters, and it will be interesting to see how Sega react in comparison.

Monster Trucks

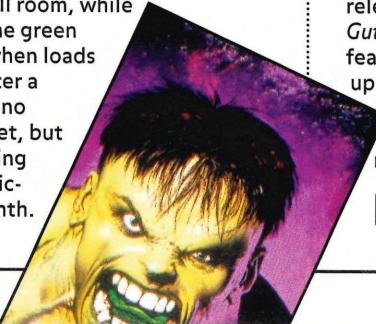
As work progresses nicely on *Destruction Derby 2*, Reflections have started work on *Monster Trucks*, due for release through Psygnosis early next year. Using the same 3D views, *Monster Trucks* sits the player within a huge 4x4 as they are invited to crush cars with a friend, or enter a cross country race. The Monster Truck race takes place across a number of open plan 3D levels, with the player guiding their truck up steep hills and past bumpy obstacles as a number of CPU-controlled vehicles vie for first place. And, in keeping with *Destruction Derby*'s wrecking tendencies, the demolition scene pits one or two players against each other as they attempt to crush a row of cars into the ground in the quickest time possible. *Monster Trucks* is currently 50% complete, with Reflections perfecting the 3D engine and now refining the controls and graphics, but a release date has still to be set.



REFLECTIONS' LATEST TITLE HITS THE ROAD...

Hulk 3D

US Gold are to encroach into Acclaim's Marvel licence territory with a 3D game based on Bruce Banner and his Hulk alter-ego. *Hulk 3D* is said to mix fighting and puzzle aspects within a *Doom*-style environment, with US Gold keen to start from scratch with the franchise following a dismal initial Hulk outing on the 16bit systems. *Hulk 3D*'s puzzle aspect is expected to run along the lines of reverting back to Banner when the player needs to pass through a small room, while reverting to the green giant's form when loads of baddies enter a room. There's no release date yet, but we hope to bring you the first pictures next month.



Gears and Guts 4x4

Acting as competition against Psygnosis' *Monster Trucks*, Gremlin have just taken the wraps off *Gears and Guts 4x4* for the PlayStation. Opting for a polygon landscape and vehicles as opposed to the Psygnosis game's light-sourced effects. *Gears and Guts 4x4* drops the player into desert, tundra and equally hostile terrains as the player races across its six courses for trucking glory. *Gears and Guts 4x4* also boasts a 'semi-automatic' gear system which means that the player must anticipate steep hills and tight corners by changing down or up through the gears, while simultaneously steering around the hazardous terrain which threatens to overturn the vehicle. Planned for a November/December release, *Gears and Guts 4x4* should also feature two-player link up possibilities and a number of race options in its final incarnation. A preview will follow.

...AS DOES GREMLIN'S.

Tanks

Resembling Warner Interactive's *Return Fire* comes *Tanks* from BMG. Using the same top-down view, *Tanks* contains a series of missions revolving around the destruction of enemy property. Seated within the tank, the player is dropped into warzones with the enemy trundling around, out to put a stop to your plans. Release details are a little shaky at the time of writing, with development leading on the February-released PC code, with a port to the PlayStation to follow.

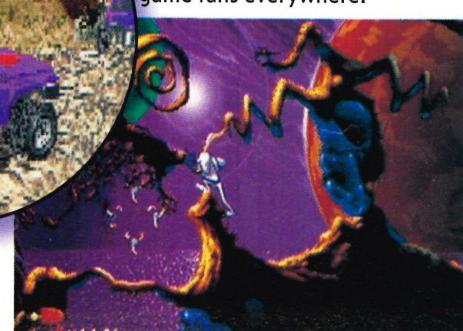
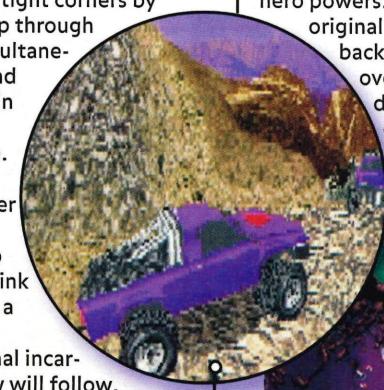
Sim City 2000

Maxis are making their PlayStation debut with a conversion of their PC classic, *Sim City 2000*. For those of you living in a small box for the last three years, *Sim City 2000* gives the player god-like abilities of a town planner, as they plan to create the city of their dreams including railways, water supplies, and everything needed to keep the inhabitants happy. All the expected problems then rear their ugly heads, with pollution bringing out demos from citizens concerned for the ecology, food shortages if not enough land is available for farming, and the odd riot from people in crap housing – oh, and UFO and Godzilla attacks aren't uncommon, either! Maxis have also taken advantage of the PlayStation's 3D capabilities, and for the first time in the history of the *Sim* series, the player can wander the streets of their city! Reviewed next issue.

SIM CITY 2000: PLAYSTATION STYLE.

Earthworm Jim

It's been more on and off than Gazza and Sheryl, but Virgin have now confirmed a PlayStation version of *Earthworm Jim* for release in September. Originally mentioned in the first issue of *PlayStation Plus*, rumours were rife that developers Playmates had scrapped the embryonic code, but Virgin have now taken delivery of an 80% complete version of the game, scotching any further talk of a Jim no-show. *Earthworm Jim* is a cartoon-style platformer, with Jim clad in a special spacesuit which endows him with super hero powers. His enemy, Psycrow, is the original owner of the suit and wants it back, sparking a battle that spans over twelve stages. His 32bit debut is planned for September, giving new hope to platform game fans everywhere.



Vandal Hearts

Konami are set to enter the RPG fray with a November release entitled *Vandal Hearts*. As opposed to much weaving of spells and wandering about, Konami are billing *Vandal Hearts* as a 'battle' RPG, with the emphasis on fighting as opposed to a reliance on spells. Spanning over thirty linked missions, the player and their party (up to fifteen men can be recruited) are left to explore sprawling fantasy worlds where bandits, magicians and warlords run amok. Each of the missions is linked to an as-yet undetermined plot, but normally end in a huge battle between the player's men and those of the enemy. During the heat of battle, the player and his opponent take turns to inflict pain on each other, but a new system Konami have developed for the game now takes the local



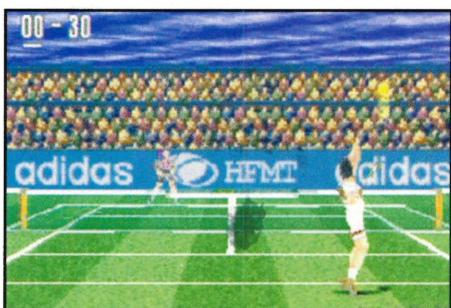
Jet Wave

Soon to be porting over from the arcades on to the PlayStation is the latest in Konami's attempt to dominate the world of console sports sims. After various olympic sports, NHL, NFL and NBA titles, say a hello to *Jet Wave*. This introduces all hydrophobes to the virtual reality of Jet Skiing without the risk of actually having to get soaked. Similar to motor cycle racing games, here the rough terrain is the waters of the world's leading jet ski tracks, and you even get the chance to ride waves. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced rider, the most fun looks to take place zooming around, James Bond style, the canals of Venice.



Hyper Final Match Tennis

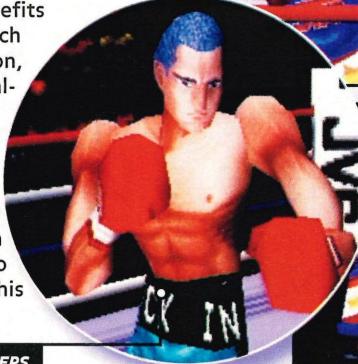
JVC are planning to take on Codemasters on the centre court, by converting Human's *Hyper Final Match Tennis* to PAL machines. Offering a number of rendered seeds, the player is invited to volley, lob and smash across the courts of the world in pursuit of cup glory. As with *Sampras Extreme Tennis*, the Human game offers various court surfaces and views, with a number of cameras allowing for distant, close up and panning views, with off-screen umpires calling the faults and points via sampled voices. *Hyper Final Match Tennis* is likely to undergo a name change before hitting these shores, and the game will be released through the aforementioned Virgin deal sometime in September.



Victory Boxing

One of the hardy perennials of these news pages, JVC's *Victory Boxing* has finally sauntered into the PlayStation ring. With the Saturn version available for nearly a year, JVC have decided against a straight conversion of the Sega code, instead taking the time to add light-sourced 'skins' to the polygon pugilists, and enhancing the boxer intelligence to make for better opponents. Similarly, the designers have concentrated on making the animation more realistic, with the sprites grappling each other as they get tired, and realistic flinches and recoils as the punches hammer home. *Victory Boxing* also now benefits from new camera views which zoom in and out of the action, with the camera automatically panning out as the players break apart and back in when punches are being traded. *Victory Boxing* is provisionally lined up for a December release, by which time Nigel Benn will have no doubt retired and changed his mind six more times.

THE ALL-NEW, 'SKINNED' FIGHTERS.



Skeleton Warriors

Playmates and Virgin have teamed up to create a hack 'n' slash platform game based on the kids' cartoon *Skeleton Warriors*. Set within a number of platform environments, the game casts the player as a square-jawed hero out to retrieve a magical light star crystal from the bony fingers of the said bone-based warriors. While aimed at the younger gamer, *Skeleton Warriors*' four missions span many levels fea-

turing bad guys and heroes from the cartoon – with the likes of Baron Dark and 'Dagger' acting as bosses the player encounters. The player's mission begins with a trip into Baron Dark's catacomb-based lair, and the game progresses up and down ladders, through a handful of 3D flying levels, to a final confrontation with Dagger who is holding the last piece of the crystal. A preview will follow next issue.

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PLAYSTATION PLUS

RECOMMENDS

OLYMPIC SOCCER

US Gold's excellent footy game relegates most of the others to the second division. With good passing and shooting, plus a need to actually play the game rather than sit back and let the CPU do all the work, it'll be a while before the crown passes elsewhere.



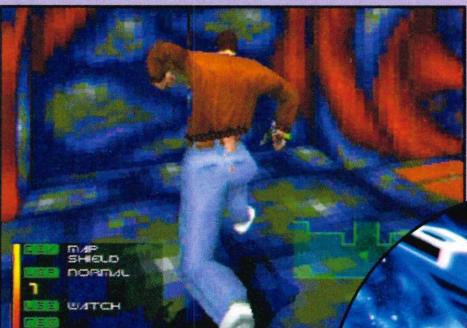
BUST A MOVE 2

Okay so it's a couple of cute Brontosaurii, their friends and foes and an arcade conversion that ought to be crap on the PlayStation. Except it isn't, it's addictive. Like sex, it can be okay on your own, but far better with someone else – *Bust A Move 2* relies on nothing else but straightforward fun.



FADE TO BLACK

EA strike gold here with a further outing for Conrad Hart of *Flashback* fame blowing his way through hordes of Morphs, robots and defence mechanisms. Trust no one seems to be the order of the day because everyone has their own agenda. Or they might simply be Morphs.



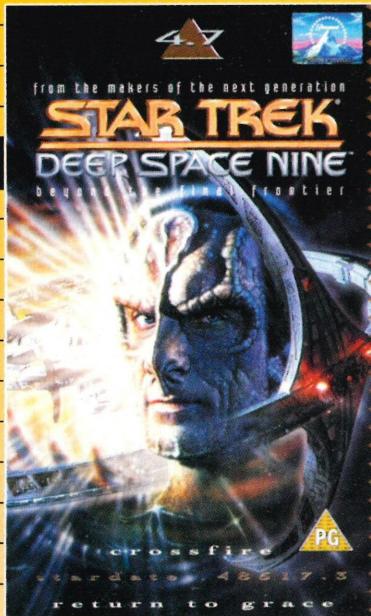
THE BLOCKBUSTER VIDEO CHARTS

What's tickling your fancy in your local Blockbuster rental store — now with added PlayStation.

Last month's positions in brackets.

TOP TEN VIDEO GAME RENTALS

1. [NE] ADIDAS POWER SPORTS SOCCER (PSYGNOSIS)
2. [1] DESTRUCTION DERBY (PSYGNOSIS)
3. [2] ALIEN TRILOGY (ACCLAIM)
4. [3] RIDGE RACER (NAMCO)
5. [4] TWISTED METAL (SONY)
6. [NE] DOOM (GTI)
7. [5] WORMS (OCEAN)
8. [10] TEKKEN (NAMCO)
9. [-] ESPN EXTREME GAMES (SONY)
10. [NE] SHELLSHOCK (CORE)

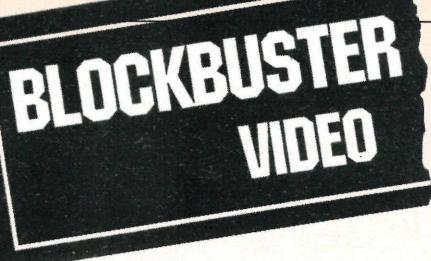


TOP TEN RETAIL VIDEOS

1. [RE] BATMAN FOREVER
2. [-] TIMON AND PUMBA
3. [NE] STAR TREK: VOYAGER 2.6
4. [1] THE X FILES (ABDUCTION)
5. [NE] SPIDERMAN
6. [NE] STAR TREK: DS9 4.7
7. [NE] ANDRE
8. [-] POCAHONTAS
9. [7] STREETFIGHTER
10. [NE] DUMB AND DUMBER

TOP TEN RENTAL VIDEOS

1. [NE] SEVEN
2. [NE] ACE VENTURA: WHEN NATURE CALLS
3. [NE] BABE
4. [NE] ASSASSINS
5. [1] GOLDENEYE
6. [2] CRIMSON TIDE
7. [NE] THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT
8. [3] FRENCH KISS
9. [5] MURDER IN THE FIRST
10. [4] BRAVEHEART



**Bring golf to the
fore on Saturn
and PlayStation...**

actua **GOLF**

"The best golf game ever"

PlayStation Plus



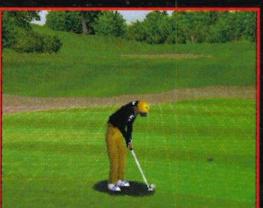
**9 out of 10 "The best golf game
on the PlayStation so far"**

PSX Pro



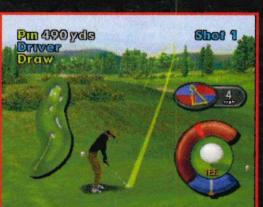
**90% "If you want a golf game for
your PlayStation, look no further
than this"**

Mean Machines PlayStation



**4 out of 5 "The best PlayStation
golf game"**

C&VG



**8 out of 10. PlayStation
Star Player Award**



Official PlayStation Magazine



Coming Soon

**actua
SPORTS
SERIES**





WIN!

A Primal Rage Arcade Machine!

The people at Warner Interactive are so pleased with their recently-released Primal Rage conversion, that they have given us one of the original arcade machines to give away. Due to the impressive nature of the prize, there can be only one winner, and to stand a chance of winning just answer the following question and send your answer to **PRIMAL RAGE COMPETITION** at the usual editorial address:

Which of these is NOT a Primal Rage character?

- A. Blizzard**
- B. Tyro**
- C. Sauron**

Please ensure your answers reach us by September 1st.
Usual competition rules apply.





MORE OFFENSIVE WEAPONS THAN YOU CAN SHAKE A LARGE POINTY STICK AT.

BATTLE ARENA
TOSHINDEN 2

SONY



Swords, clubs, skewers, whips, swords, scythes, batons and swords.
Battle Arena Toshinden 2 has enough lethal hardware to start a small war. In your living room.
So be careful. Or you could have someone's eye out.

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PLAYSTATION



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GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVE
CONTINUES: MEMORY CARD
SKILL LEVELS: 3

| | |
|---------|-----------|
| RELEASE | SEPTEMBER |
| PRICE | £44.99 |
| BY | PSYGNOSIS |
| PLAYERS | 1-2 |

RENAULT
Rothmans

ANDERSEN
CONSULTING

Formula 1

FORMULA 1

Having already endured months of rigorous testing on the qualifying track, Psygnosis' Formula 1 is at long last ready roll out of the pit lane. Ranking alongside Resident Evil as one of 1996's most eagerly awaited games, Formula 1 is now primed to fight off stiff competition, taking pole position in a bid for a place on the winner's podium. PlayStation Plus is the first to sit behind the wheel of the most realistic racing game ever.

The Racing Season



After the initial tidal wave of software, the sea of PlayStation games began to calm.

While *WipEout* and *Ridge Racer* managed to stay afloat, countless titles strayed from public interest and were left to decay in the murky depths. Since then very few game have managed to capture the imagination, with perhaps the exception of *Doom* and a handful of other hopefuls. However, very few games are quite so eagerly awaited as

Formula 1, so much so that even *PlayStation Plus* needed a second look at Psygnosis' stunner in the preview that followed up Issue 6's special report.

Now, some six months later, the game is ready to roll out of the pit lane and into the public eye, but was it worth the wait? Well, yes. To make a somewhat off-the-wall comparison, *Formula 1* is the well-hung porn star as opposed to so many other virginal wannabes – while those alternative racing games fiddle nervously with the flies of playability, *Formula 1* drops its trousers and lets its muscular gameplay stand proud. Whether you lust for fleshy chunks of simulation or are just out for quick romp with no strings attached, *Formula 1* should leave you completely and utterly satisfied and gasping for more.

But enough of the sexual comparisons, is it every motor racing fans dream? Well, if you fantasise about statistically-correct season rosters with every single driver and constructor from the 1995 championship, topped off with heavenly gameplay and divine presentation then you'd better better reach for the pyjamas and the Kleenex – this one could be messy.



REALITY HURTS

Thanks to extensive options *Formula 1* can be as easy or complicated as you like. In its simplest guise, drivers are practically dragged around the track, the assisted steering and automatic brakes leaving the player with little else to do but press hard on the accelerator. Of course, these two can be switched off for a tougher game, as now the cars spin wildly out of control if they stray onto the grass, and also judging the correct braking distance for different corners is incredibly challenging. Then there's the choice between manual or automatic gears and variable weather, all of which affect the difficulty of the game itself.

However, for the ultimate in realism, tyre wear should be switched on and the car damage activated, leaving the player no option but to avoid the other cars or drive the remainder of the race with a damaged steering column or broken wings. Without these airfoils the downforce of the car is decreased, drastically reducing its grip and making the vehicle much harder to control. A real test of skill is to successfully negotiate Monaco in the pouring rain, with the downforce reduced to a minimum and both the front and rear wings hanging from the car – manage this and overtaking Schumacher should be easier than beating a three-wheeled go-kart.

Although *Formula 1* has been designed as an outright simulation, thanks to extensive option menus it can be played at almost any level. A quick race being the most basic option and therefore is ideal for beginners, but what about the intermediate player?

LADDER

The strangest game mode of the three, entering a ladder competition pits the player against other constructors rather than the drivers themselves. Starting at the very bottom, the aim of each race is to finish ahead of the team ranked above you! If you succeed, the next target will be a slightly better team. This continues until the opposition eventually becomes Frank Williams and his near-perfect constructors record.

**CHAMPIONSHIP**

Entering the championship is the closest thing there is to actually competing in the racing season, placing drivers in a multi-race league that can last anything from a couple of rounds to a full-blown seasons, competing on 17 circuits from across the globe. Having toyed with the set-up of the car and the race variables, determining the weather for the forthcoming races and also enabling or disabling brake assist and other aids, players must then alter the realism of the gameplay. Activating car damage means the performance of the vehicle deteriorates with each crash, while the length of the race must be taken into consideration when enabling tyre wear and also determining the fuel-to-weight ratio at the start of a race.

Having picked a team and opted for a driver, the championship begins with each of the circuits raced in order, starting with Interlagos in Brazil. Drivers are allowed as practice laps as they desire, before lining up for the qualifying laps which will win them a position on the starting grid. Unlike the practice lap the track is littered with other cars during qualifying, out to achieve a place on the front row for themselves. Timing is therefore vital, waiting for gaps in between cars to start the lap. After three laps the race itself begins, the players starting position depending on the time they notched up during the qualifying laps.

Having successfully completed the race, complete with pitstops if needed, the finishing positions are detailed and the appropriate scores added on to the relevant drivers. For example, ten points are awarded for finishing first, while a mere six points are given to the driver placed second. Finish in seventh place or lower and no points are awarded but, as Murray says himself, there's always next time.

**QUICK RACE**

Formula 1 is played at its most basic by selecting the quick game option. Technical details like downforce and tyre wear are ignored, making way for a straightforward race for the finishing line. Having selected the driver and team, Murray Walker ambles through the usual pre-race spiel before the lights turn green and the race is on. With no gears to worry about and automatic brakes and steering assist practically guiding the car around the course, simply keeping the accelerator firmly pressed down for a place in the top six.



CONTINUED OVER

AROUND THE WORLD



INTERLAGOS
Brazil
Length: 4.325 km
Lap record: 1m 18.455s
1994 Winner: Schumacher



BUENOS ARIES
Argentina
Length: 4.259 km
Lap Record: 1m 30.522s
1994 Winner: N/A



IMOLA
San Marino
Length: 4.895 km
Lap record: 1m 24.335s
1994 Winner: Schumacher



CATALUNYA
Spain
Length: 4.727 km
Lap record: 1m 22.827s
1994 Winner: Hill



MONTE CARLO
Monaco
Length: 3.328 km
Lap record: 1m 21.076s
1994 Winner: Schumacher

As Formula 1 is endorsed by the official Formula 1 governing body it naturally includes all 17 of the circuits that make up the racing season. Each is remarkably realistic too, featuring every straight, corner and bump of the real thing, as well as the proper billboard advertising that lines the side of each circuit. For example, Monaco is instantly recognisable by the Lowens tunnel and the Tabac, while fans of Formula 1 will instantly recognise Silverstone's Club corner and the Hangar straight.

ADELAIDE

AUSTRALIA
Lap Distance: 2.349 Miles
Race Distance: 190.155 Miles/81 Laps
Track Record: Damon Hill (Williams), 1m 15.381s.

1. TURN ONE
A simple chicane leading off from the start line, approach the turn in fifth before dropping down to fourth to corner.

2. WAKEFIELD ROAD
Pulling out of the chicane, push the accelerator hard to the floor, slip up into fifth and pull over to the left to prepare for the next corner.

3. WAKEFIELD CORNER
This sharp right hander is preceded by a bumpy straight so expect a rough ride during the run up. Slow right down and take the bend in second.

4. FLINDERS STREET
A short straight that joins to very sharp bends, accelerate briefly before slamming on the anchors once more and changing down to second gear.

5. EAST TERRACE
After exiting in second gear, kick in the power and accelerate up to fourth gear and then power around the shallow left and right bends. Keep on the power until you reach the medium right hander.



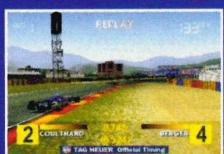
MONTRÉAL
Canada
Length: 4.430 km
Lap record: 1m 21.500s
1994 Winner: Schumacher



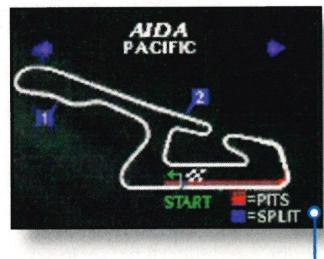
MAGNY-COURS
France
Length: 4.250s
Lap record: 1m 17.070s
1994 Winner: Schumacher



SILVERSTONE
Great Britain
Length: 5.057 km
Lap record: 1m 22.515s
1994 Winner: Hill



SUZUKA
Japan
Length: 5.859 km
Lap record: 1m 40.646s
1994 Winner: Hill



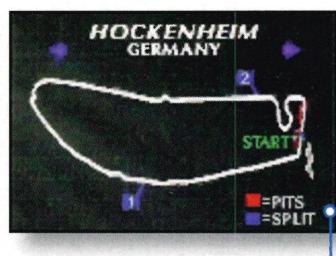
AIDA
Pacific
Length: 3.702 km
Lap record: 1m 14.023s
1994 Winner: Schumacher



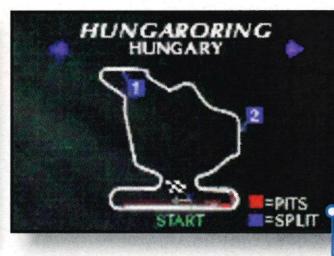
NURBURGRING
Europe
Length: 4.542 km
Lap record: 1m 21.180s
1994 Winner: Schumacher



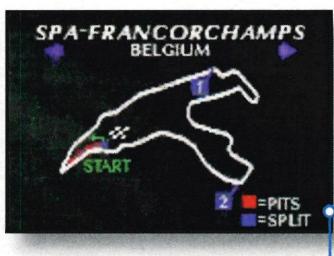
ESTORIL
Portugal
Length: 4.360 km
Lap record: 1m 14.859s
1994 Winner: Hill



HOCKENHEIM
Germany
Length: 6.815 km
Lap record: 1m 41.591s
1994 Winner: Berger



HUNGARORING
Hungary
Length: 3.968 km
Lap record: 1m 18.308s
1994 Winner: Schumacher



SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS
Belgium
Length: 6.974 km
Lap record: 1m 51.095s
1994 Winner: Hill



MONZA
Italy
Length: 5.800 km
Lap record: 1m 23.575s
1994 Winner: Hill



IT'S THE PITS

Perfecting pitstops is vital for long distance races in which fuel consumption and tyre wear play an important factor. Choosing to make two or three stops during a race could mean the difference between winning and losing, so getting the fuel levels right is a delicate balancing act – too little and you'll have to stop for more, too much and the car will be weighed down by unnecessary fuel load. The downforce on both the front and rear wings can be adjusted during a pitstop too, as well as switching between dry slicks and wet tread tyres depending on the weather conditions.



SERIAL THRILLER

Psygnosis has continued to dominate the two-player game with serial link versions of *WipeOut* and *Destruction Derby*, and continues its support for multi-player games with a stunning two player option for *Formula 1*. Both gamers can choose their driver from the complete season roster, racing on a single circuit either in the simple arcade mode or more realistic grand prix. In addition to race against a full grid of other drivers, players can compete head-to-head without the additional worry of computer-controlled vehicles.



WINNING FORMULA

ARROWS HART IS JUST ONE OF 13 CONSTRUCTORS.

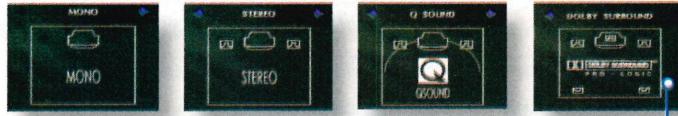
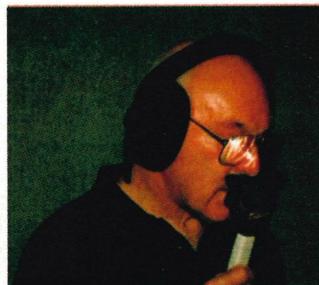
Okay, *Formula 1* features every track from the racing season but what about drivers? Again, because it's a licensed game, *Formula 1* includes the complete 1995 line-up, with every driver from every team that competed during the season. This gives a total of 13 teams and 35 drivers, as numerous teams including McLaren changed their driver roster halfway through the championship and so the game has been adapted accordingly. Each driver has been modelled on their 1995 performance too, with Damon Hill and Michael Schumacher leading the field followed closely by David Coulthard. This level of success is mimicked in the game itself, with these three more often than not finishing in the top six, and even driving more aggressively to fight off the back markers and opposition.





WALKER'S LISPS

As well as honing the game's graphics to perfection, Psygnosis has concentrated getting the sound right. Of course, there's the brilliant (if sometimes annoying) Murray Walker commentary that runs throughout, but there are also comprehensive audio options that will optimise the performance of your system. For example, there's the option to utilise Dolby Surround Pro Logic if the PlayStation is connected to the necessary system and five speaker, or switch over to Q Sound, a cheaper alternative that gives almost the same level of depth to the sound with just two speakers. If you're playing on an old television though, you may as well stick to the monophonic playback.



**FOR US MERE MORTALS WITH ORDINARY TELEVISIONS, STICK TO Q SOUND.
FOR THE ULTIMATE AUDIO EXPERIENCE YOU'LL NEED 5 SPEAKERS!**

COMMENT

STEVE

There are many great racing games for the PlayStation, but with *Formula 1* Psygnosis have gone one step further and created a complete racing package. While the basic arcade mode will please *Virtua Racing* fans who wish to experiment with a few laps, ardent fans of the most exhilarating sport on Earth will thrill in the ability to experience the corners and chicanes only the likes of Hill and Coulthard are likely to drive through in the next five years. Everything in *Formula 1* is geared towards progress. While initially most wannabe Hills will stick to corner-assisted cars with automatically-changed gears, as confidence grows so these options can be switched off until, finally, the streets of Monaco await veterans willing to experience the skill and timing which separates the good *Formula 1* drivers from the rest. Quite simply, this is an outstanding title. To call it a game just doesn't do it justice, and in creating *Formula 1* Psygnosis have created a new high in video game development. Games don't a great deal better than this, and this is a milestone in the annals of video game history.

REPLAY AWAY

After battling for first place drivers can indulge in the instant replay which records up to approximately seven laps of the previous race. As in the game itself multiple views are on offer, from the usual six internal and external camera angles to the more dynamic television camera view. Players can focus on any car during the replay, the view switching automatically as the car snakes around the course.





COME RAIN AND SHINE

Formula 1 is crammed with views. The in-car angle is more realistic but the chase camera is easier to use.



In keeping with the game's ultra-high level of realism there is the option to include variable weather, which determines a wet or track surface depending on the location of the circuit. Dry, sunny circuits are obviously easier on the driver and car while speeding across a wet surface can often have disastrous results as the vehicle begins to aquaplane and spin wildly out of control.

Rather than rain pouring from the heaven's the wet weather is depicted by a mist that hangs in the air and thick spray that gushes from the cars in front. Visibility is drastically reduced while the safe braking distance is doubled as even treaded tyres skid on wet tarmac.

RESOLUTION X

To take advantage of big screen televisions *Formula 1* includes two additional screen resolutions. The first is a wide-screen option that crunches the play area into a tiny letter box with huge black border. Not the best way to experience the game, admittedly, but one that will no doubt appeal to hardcore fanatic who like the authenticity this television-style view adopts. The high resolution mode is, to be quite honest, just as useless unless the game is played on a 30" monster television. Any smaller and the screen is almost indistinguishable, the car and track blending into one incomprehensible mush. It's best to stick with the normal screen mode then.



COMMENT

ALEX

Formula 1 is proof again that Psygnosis has mastered the PlayStation racing game. Having led the field with *WipeOut*, *Formula 1* just strengthens the company's position at the front of the pack. This is simply the most comprehensive, detailed and realistic racing game ever to grace Sony's 32bit machine, offering a perfect balance between fine-tuned gameplay and in-depth simulation. You see, the beauty of *Formula 1* is that while it is at heart a true simulation for perfect die-hard motor racing fans, the level of complexity can be toned down to make the game as instantly appealing as, say, *Ridge Racer*. It's this broad attraction that makes *Formula 1* a game that can be enjoyed gamers of all skills, and although most will cut their teeth in the simple arcade mode, progressing to the authentic simulation is just a matter of time and practice. Near-perfect gameplay is matched by sparkling presentation too, making it the mould-breaking racer it always promised to be. *Formula 1* is a groundbreaking game then, and one that's a joy to behold.

RATING

| | |
|-------------|----|
| GRAPHICS | 92 |
| ANIMATION | 82 |
| SOUND FX | 91 |
| MUSIC | 90 |
| STABILITY | 92 |
| PLAYABILITY | 93 |
| OVERALL | 93 |

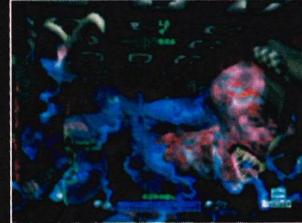


HARD



Bloody

Strategy



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<http://www.ea.com/>

**GAMES[®]
WORKSHOP**



SPACE HULK™

Vengeance of the Blood Angels™

| | |
|---------|-------------|
| COMPANY | CORE DESIGN |
| RELEASE | SEPTEMBER |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| PLAYERS | 1 |
| GENRE | ARCADE/ADV |



Indiana Jones has proved a major influence in the expansion of the arcade/adventure genre.

Ever since Harrison Ford fled from that boulder in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (repeated in *Resident Evil*), rode a mine cart into the Temple of Doom (as seen in *Cheesy the Mouse*, or any other platform game you care to mention), and avoided jutting spears during the Last Crusade (*Crash Bandicoot* anybody?) video games have been quick to borrow Indy's greatest moments for their use. Rather than nab the odd idea for their latest release though, Core have opted to embark on a mission of their own that would make Indy baulk at its content.

Unveiled in demo form over eighteen months ago, *Tomb Raider* is now entering the final straight, with its star, Lara Croft, skipping the felt fedora and whip in favour of tight khaki shorts and a pair of pistols – and her character is as far from Harrison Ford's goodie-goodie archaeologist as possible.

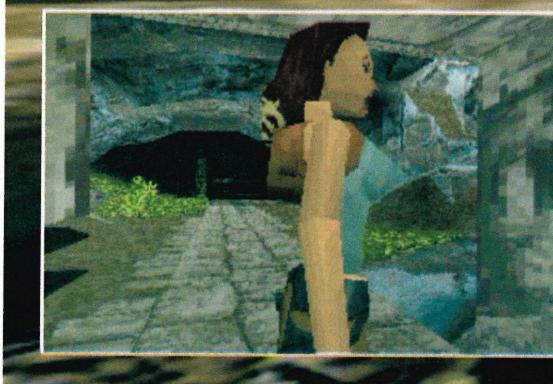
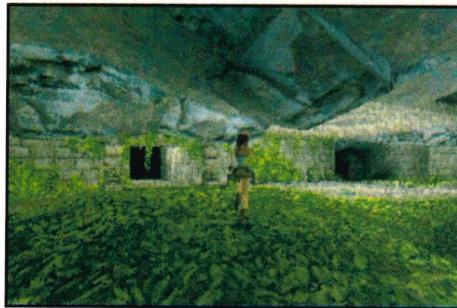
Recruited by a mysterious syndicate, Lara is being handsomely paid to recover a mythical relic known as the Scion. According to mythology, whoever holds the Scion will be given mastery over the world, and such is its power that it was smashed a thousand years ago by the last man to hold it who died immediately after.

The legend continues, however, that such was the dark power within the Scion that the attempt to smash it only reduced it to three pieces, and with its power scaring the local religious fraternity, three parties were told to distribute the pieces across the world so that its awesome capabilities could never be used again. As the centuries progressed, the whereabouts of the three pieces became shrouded in mystery, but now the said syndicate believes it has found an ancient manuscript detailing the positions of the Scion pieces. As such, Lara's reputation as one of the greatest adventurers of the day brings her first to the entrance of an old Inca temple, and then on to Egypt and Greece where the final parts of the Scion are said to rest...

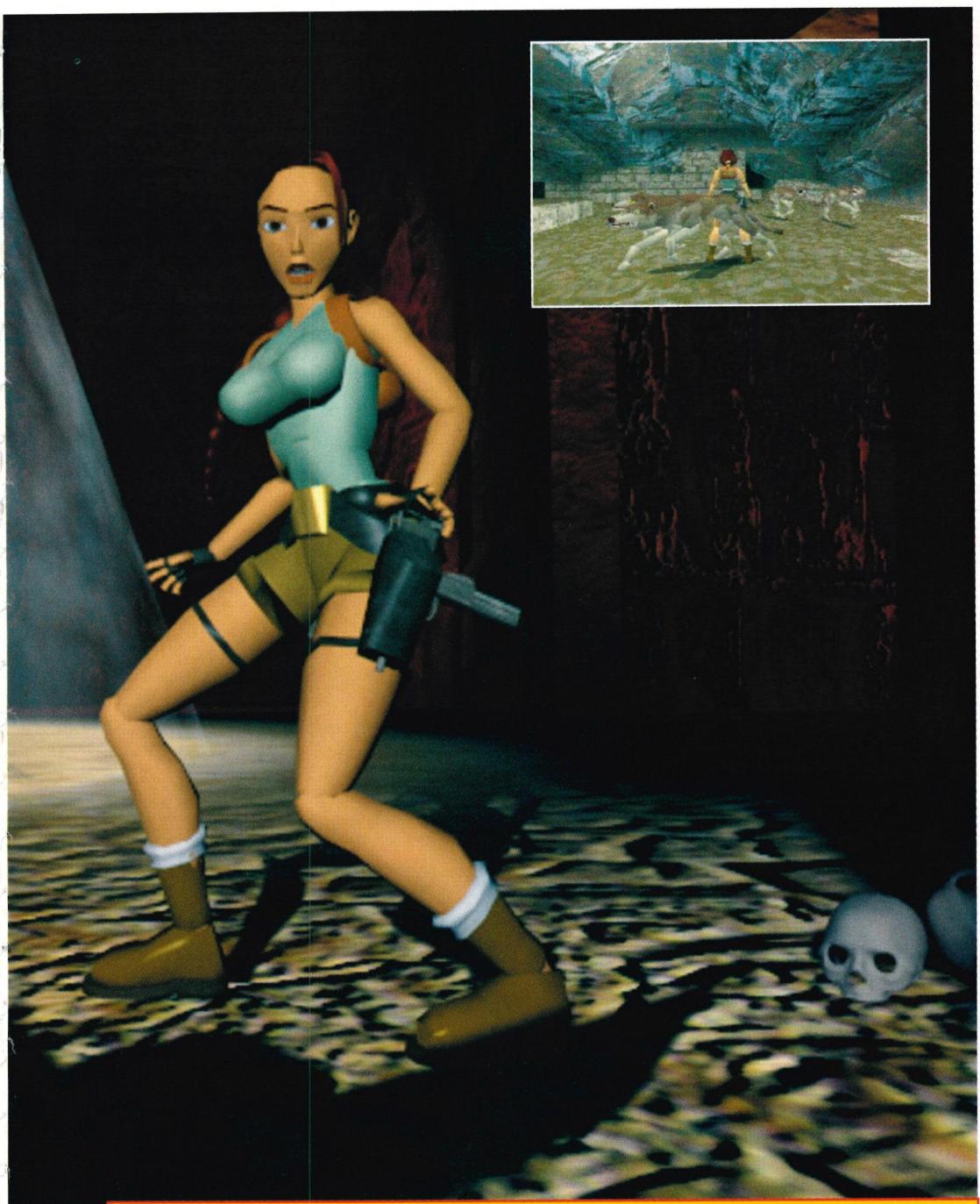
Tomb Raider

THE TEMPLES OF DOOM

To add realism to the surroundings and depth to the plot, Core's development team decided to use 'real' locations from our history. Using reference works by esteemed archaeologists the game's level designers, Heather Gibson and Neil Boyd, have recreated everything from hieroglyphics on the walls and column design in order to make the temples and caverns as close to the real thing as possible. With the emphasis on real history, Core chose the three most obvious historical points for the game. The Inca level is based on pictures of the temples found in the Peruvian rain forest, with the game's temple recreating the terraced buildings of the time, complete with the culture's love of opulent gold furnishing the surroundings. Within the Incan level, Lara finds waterfalls, a disused army barrack, a sacrificial temple, and, finally, the King's chamber which is said to contain the first part of the Scion. The Greek stage recreates the classic design of fluted columns and detailed mosaic floors. With the Greeks' love for literature and their many gods, Lara's quest for the second piece takes her through libraries, baths and a coliseum. The final part of Lara's search takes her to sun-baked Egypt, where it is rumoured the final piece is buried at the heart of a pyramid. The game's pyramid is reported to have been built by the Pharaoh Akhenaten, and before Lara attains her goal a number of deadly puzzles lurk within the pyramid's many chambers.



TOMB RAIDER LARA CROFT BAGS HER FIRST ENEMY – A GIANT-SIZED GRIZZLY BEAR.



YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED

Tomb Raider makes the most of the PlayStation's 3D routines by immersing Lara in a stunning-looking 3D world which can be viewed from any angle. As our heroine legs it around the three buildings, the cameras can be switched around her to get bearings, while the CPU-controlled cameras swoop in and out for the best possible action viewpoints. There are four basic camera modes — one trailing Lara, one for close-ups of action, and two panning views — and considering the level of detail the rooms contain (wall coverings are faithfully recreated from text books), the speed of the game is incredible. If Lara is entering one of the many narrow corridors the Incas or Egyptian left behind, though, the player may wish to switch between one of nine distant views which allow the user to look from a greater height, exposing any previously hidden dangers.



LOADED'S
THE CREAM
AND I'M
THE PUSSY

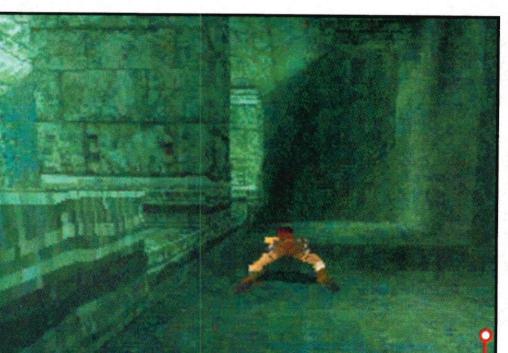
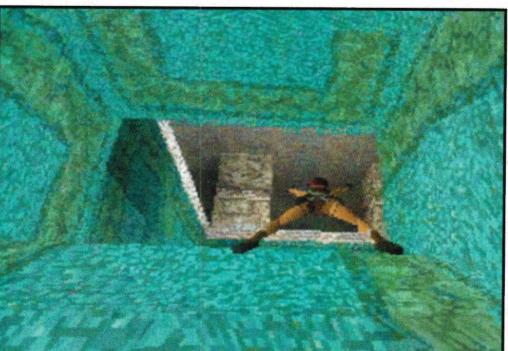
vo
.LOADED
ON PLAYSTATION AND SATURN

Gremlin
INTERACTIVE

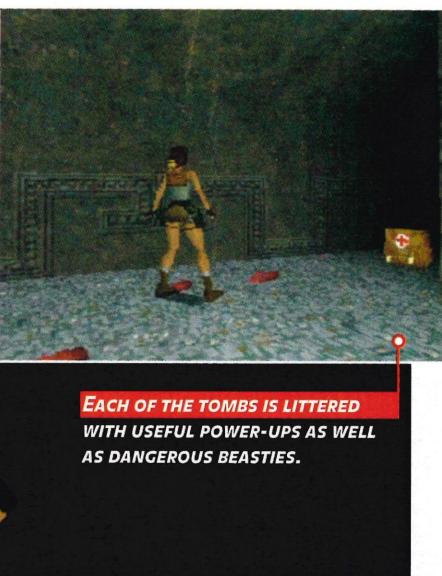
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DEEPER AND DEEPER

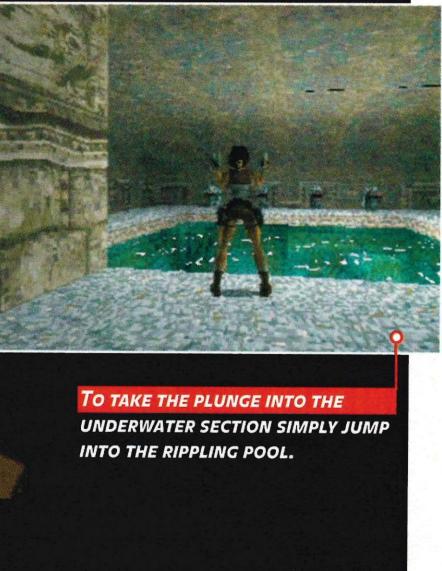
Although most of the tombs are dimly-lit chambers with hieroglyphics lining the walls, huge chunks of the game are set underwater as Lara continues to explore the farthest reaches of the tomb, totally submerged in water. Diving into the murky depths from one of the many pools dotted throughout the tombs, Lara must negotiate the complex tunnel network, solving puzzles and battling against strong currents before she runs out of breath. This is one of the most impressive sections of the game, the character animation proving both realistic and smooth. The rippling water effects and light-sourcing are also superb, the Gouraud-shaded tunnels stretching into the darkness while back at the surface, light reflects off the transparent waves as Lara takes the plunge.



DEEP WITHIN THE TOMB, LARA SEARCHES FOR HIDDEN TREASURES. ALTHOUGH SHE'S A STRONG SWIMMER SHE MUST STILL COME UP FOR AIR.



EACH OF THE TOMBS IS LITTERED WITH USEFUL POWER-UPS AS WELL AS DANGEROUS BEASTIES.



TO TAKE THE PLUNGE INTO THE UNDERWATER SECTION SIMPLY JUMP INTO THE RIPPLING POOL.

CROFT ATHLETIC

One aspect of the game Core Design concentrated on was the movement of Lara herself. Constructed from over 300 polygons she moves with the grace and agility of a panther, stalking her enemy and nimbly sprinting through the dusty tombs. Lara is capable of countless gym-

nastic flips and jumps, leaping through the air with ease and even firing down at the enemy while gliding to the ground. She can also hang from ledges, pulling herself up to higher ground before somersaulting onto her feet. Surprisingly motion-capture technology wasn't used to animate Lara Croft. Instead the game's main programmer, Tony Gard, choose to stick with conventional animation, claiming it offers greater precision and clarity. Fair enough.



EEK! SHE-BITCH
LARA OPENS FIRE
WITH TWIN PISTOLS
AS THE HUGE GRIZZLY BEAR PREPARES
TO ATTACK.



RAIDERS OF THE LOST BARK

In keeping with ancient Egyptian mythology, the pharaohs were not laid to rest alone, sealed in the tombs along with their servants as well as animals which were offered as gifts to the once-great king. Therefore the grim darkness of each tomb is plagued by a myriad of creatures, both factual and beasts of legend. Again, it was another area of the game which Core Design concentrated on, carefully ensuring each of the animals acted realistically. As a

result the wolves hunting their prey in packs, and the huge grizzly bears lumber slowly through the darkness, climbing onto their hind feet to attack. There are plans to feature countless other creatures too, from giant crocodiles to rabid bats to vicious sharks that haunt the underwater levels. Lara will also encounter various other humans throughout her adventure, some aiding her quest and others purely out to kill her.



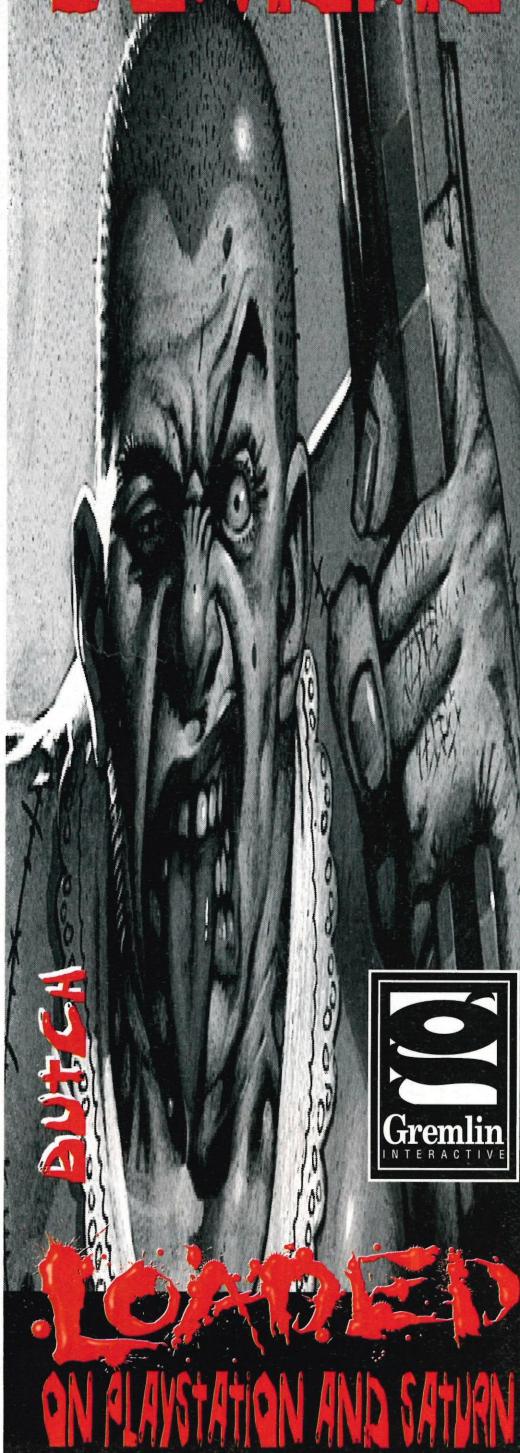
CAP HIS ASS!

She may be a girl but Lara is still one tough cookie. The tombs which she must explore are plagued by all manner of enemies but luckily this she-bitch has come equipped. Lara packs a pair of automatic pistols, carrying one in each hand to provide an unparalleled arc of fire. Firing one-handed at enemies to either side of her, Lara can also fire at multiple targets or concentrate fire on a single enemy that strays into her attacking hot spot - the area directly in front of her. At various stages through Tomb Raider Lara also picks up sticks of dynamite, used to frag the ass of bigger beasts and clear a path through chambers left in ruin.



AS LARA IS KITTED OUT WITH A PAIR OF AUTOMATIC PISTOLS SHE CAN TAKE ON MORE THAN ONE TARGET AT ONCE, BAGGING ENEMIES EITHER IN FRONT OR TO EITHER SIDE. ALTERNATIVELY SHE CAN CONCENTRATE FIRE ON A SINGLE ENEMY THAT LIES IN HER AIMING HOTSPOT.

IF YOUR GONNA WEAR PANTIES MAKE SURE THEY'RE LOADED



| | |
|---------|-------------|
| COMPANY | PSYGNOSIS |
| RELEASE | OCTOBER |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| PLAYERS | 1-2 |
| GENRE | RACING GAME |

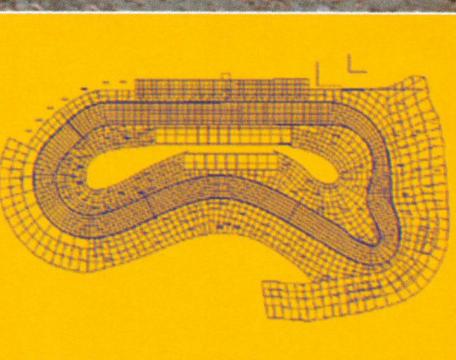
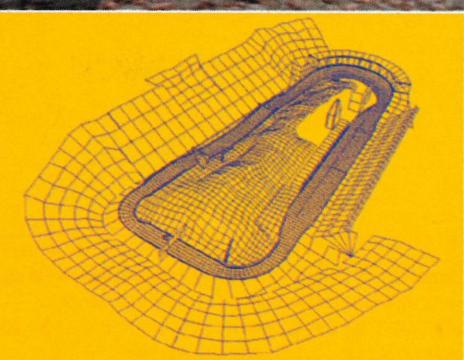
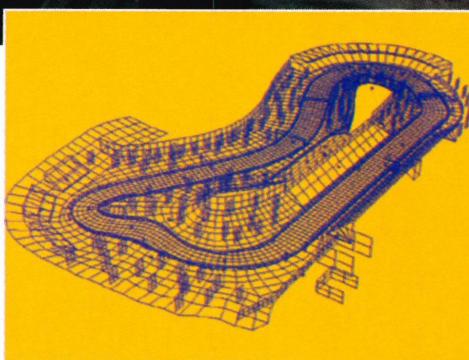
Destruction



Let's face it, when the PlayStation finally hit the shelves last September, two games were deemed the most essential purchases for the new Sony machine: *WipEout* and *Destruction Derby*. After years of promised 'true' 3D engines and arcade-style playability, Psygnosis finally introduced to reality what 'Next Gen' pundits had been wishing for for years. With the benefit of a year's hindsight, though, we can now realise that perhaps they weren't as good as we thought. They were good for their time, yes. But as far as good, old fashioned playability goes, while *WipEout* is still as enjoyable as it was (allowing for ardent racers to hone their techniques – always the sign of a good game), *Destruction Derby* now seems rather... limited. Once the initial thrill of bumping into rival cars and watching your damage indicators fade to black wears off, all that remains is an occasionally uncontrollable racer, with narrow tracks, and a decided lack of excellent crashes

bearing in mind the title.

Despite these faults, *Destruction Derby* went on to become the PlayStation's biggest-selling title (in excess of 16,000 units last March) and now Psygnosis and the development team at Reflections are ready to roll out the mkII model. Aware of all the criticisms of the first game that became apparent after prolonged play, *Destruction Derby 2* is a complete overhaul and respray compared with *WipEout 2097*'s fine tuning of its already fine engine. As such, any complaints levelled at the first game are being sorted, with the roads widened, more spectacular crashes added, and more control over the vehicle. Basically, to continue the car analogies which predictably pepper this piece, *Destruction Derby 2* is a cut and shunt of existing race games, with Reflections welding the best parts of the first game onto the bodies of superior race titles like *Ridge Racer* and *Need for Speed* – both of which only had one careful owner, of course...



Derby 2

ONE CAREFUL OWNER...

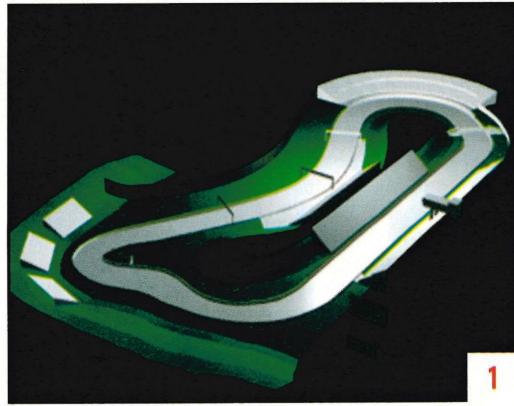
Shunting other cars was a hit or miss affair in *Destruction Derby* as the courses were invariably too narrow to offer much scope for a run up. For the sequel, Reflections have opted for the wider and longer tracks, with the roads now looking more akin to those of *Ridge Racer* and countless other race games. This means that the track length is some eight times longer than before. Similarly, the sequel's tracks are now viewed in full 3D, with undulating bumps and hills allowing for nasty blind spots and flying jumps, while track corners are now banked to make for a faster game. One of the best features of the first game was the addition to crossroads in the centre of a figure of eight track, but Reflections have taken the idea further by raising parts of the track to create what they term 'Dukes of Hazzard' jumps. This, coupled with the full replay system Reflections are hoping to incorporate, should then allow for some incredible action replays where the cars collide in mid air!



5



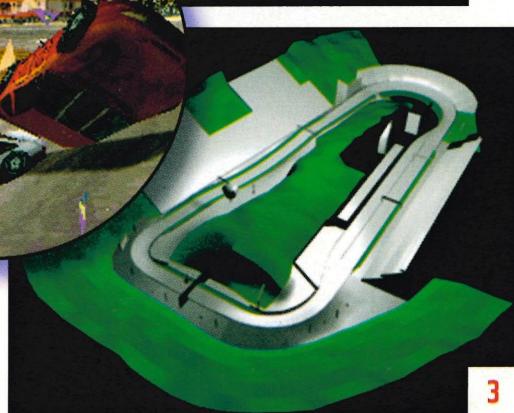
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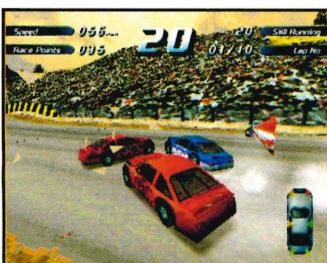
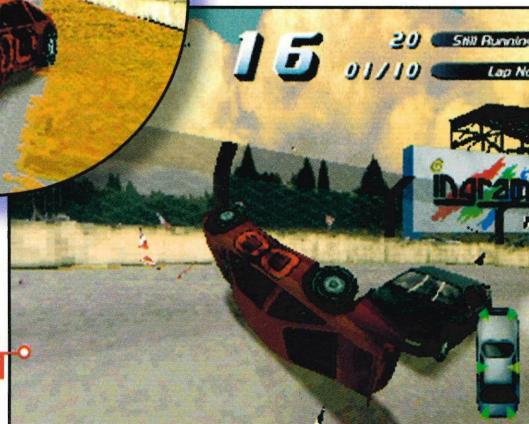
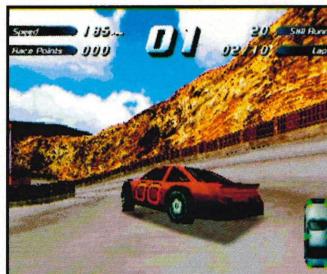
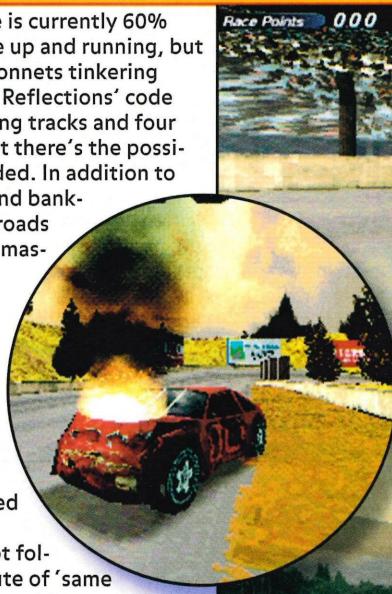
3

ROAD TO HELL

The *Destruction Derby 2* code is currently 60% complete with the 3D engine up and running, but the team are still under its bonnets tinkering with the collision detection. Reflections' code currently features seven racing tracks and four *Destruction Derby* bowls, but there's the possibility that more could be added. In addition to the aforementioned jumps and banking, old favourites like crossroads are making a return, but in a massively revamped format.

Multiple crossover points allow for even more damage possibilities, while other hazards come in the form of narrow chicanes, tunnels, angled jumps (which makes the cars roll in mid air), and even a choice of routes.

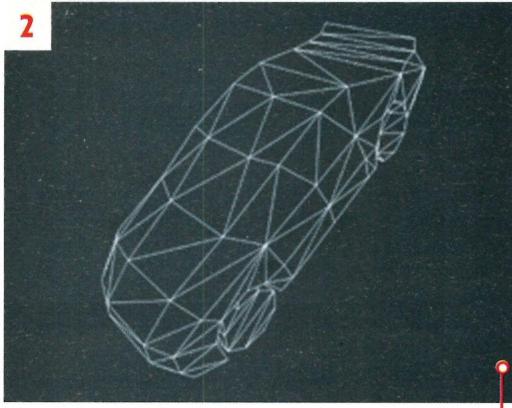
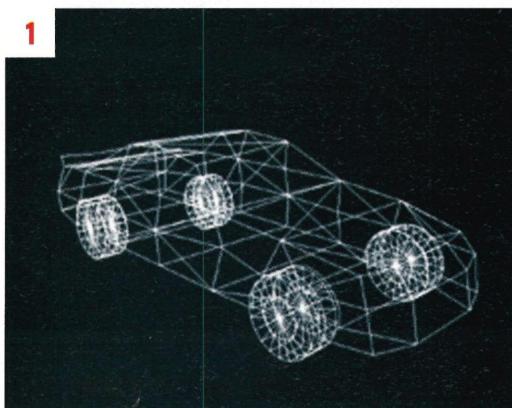
Reflections are very pleased with *Destruction Derby 2*'s progress, stating that it is not following the typical sequel route of 'same game, new tracks,' although problems with the PlayStation's clipping (where some objects disappear) have caused more than a few headaches as the wider roads have been implemented.



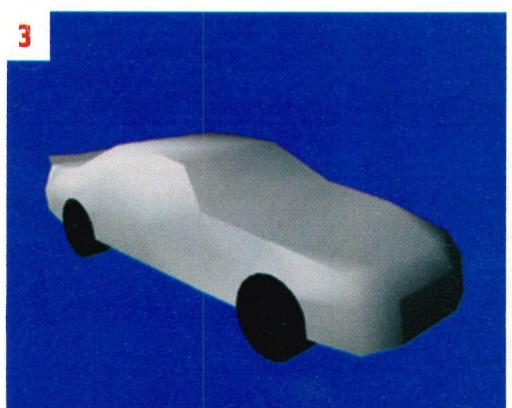
ROLLS LEAVE THE PLAYER STRICKEN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD. ONLY A SECONDARY HIT CAN RIGHT THEM — OR PUT THEM OUT COMPLETELY.

VORSPRUNG DURCH

Reflection have almost completely abandoned the code used in the first game, preferring to start from scratch. The basic aim of the game is still to collect points by smashing into other cars, and for the most part the race options are the same. The Wreckin' Race is simply a fight to the death, while the titular Destruction Derby is a free-for-all set within a small arena, and a Stock option is a basic race with minimal crashes but where use of force is allowed to push to the finishing line first. Of all the differences, though, it is the cars that are set to benefit the most – both in terms of handling and aesthetics. As the tracks are wider, it is now easier to recover from a spin, but the cars have been given suspension wherein they lean if the wheels are locked into a turn and make for more impressive sliding effects around the banked corners. Graphically, the vehicles are far superior, too. The cars in the first game were flat and unlit, so Reflections have used Gouraud shading to accentuate the bumps and dents they take and to generally add realism. With the cars built as true 3D models and with the textures overlaid, the dents and the lighting effects are then added in real time with no discernible slow down as the extra effects are added.

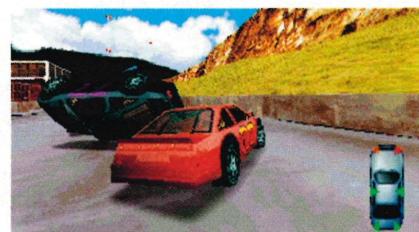
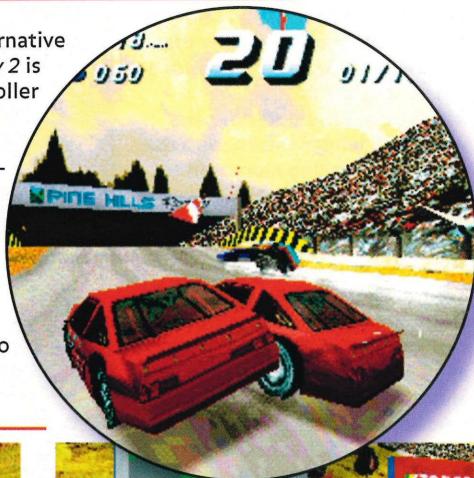


THE 3D SKELETON CAN BE ROTATED TO ANY ANGLE, ALLOWING THE 'SKIN' TO BE PLACED READY FOR THE LIGHT-SOURCING TO BE OVERLAI



WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Psynopsis are always keen to offer alternative control methods, and *Destruction Derby 2* is set to support Namco's NegCom controller and the Mad Catz steering wheel and pedal set up. Apparently, the latter is particularly effective for the racing sections of the game, and the more advanced testers found themselves able to mimic 007's infamous driving on two wheels stunt! Although a two-player mode is supported through the serial cable, it was deemed impossible to add a split-screen to the game due to the complexity of the sprites.

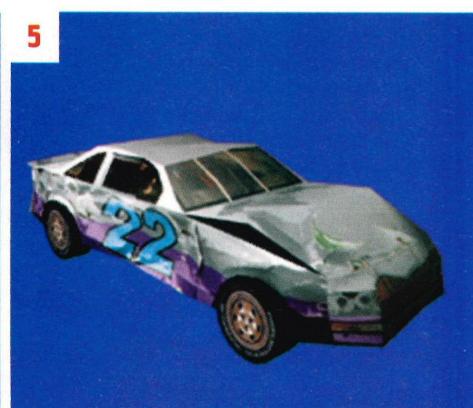
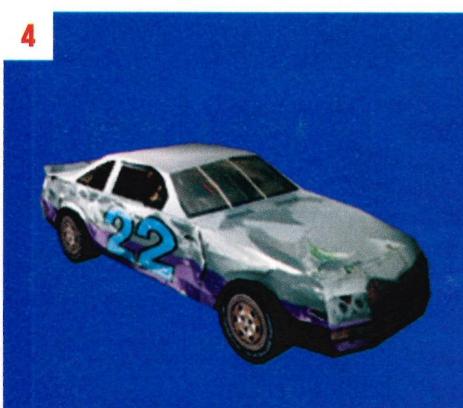


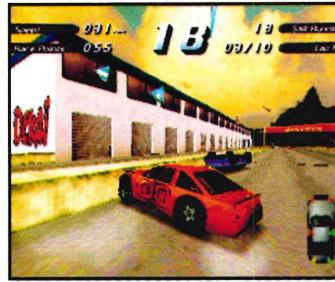
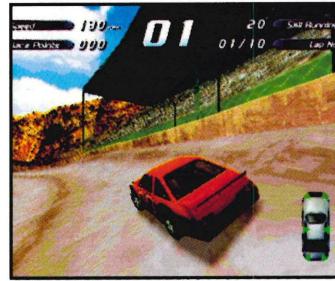
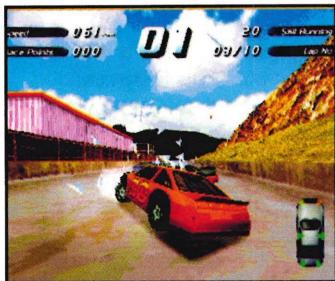
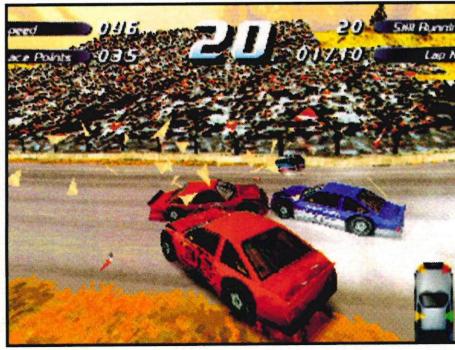
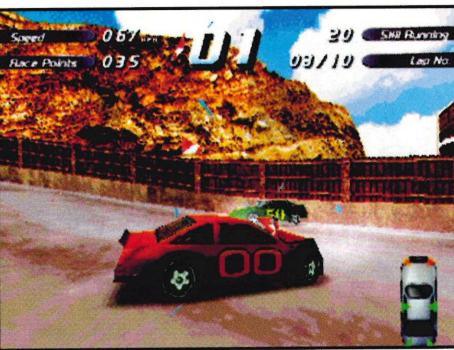
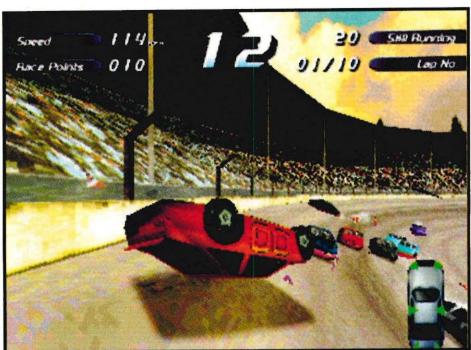
ROAD PAGE

Speech in the first game was limited to an English actor shouting 'Wow! What a smash!' every now and then in an American accent, but the voicing duties have now been handed to Paul Page who is an American commentator famed for his work during the Indy 500 and Daytona 500 series for NBC Sports. Reflections gave him a script to record on a recce across the US tracks, but Page ad-libbed a lot of the material to be used in the final game by imagining a race in his head! Page's words are to be accompanied by a suit-



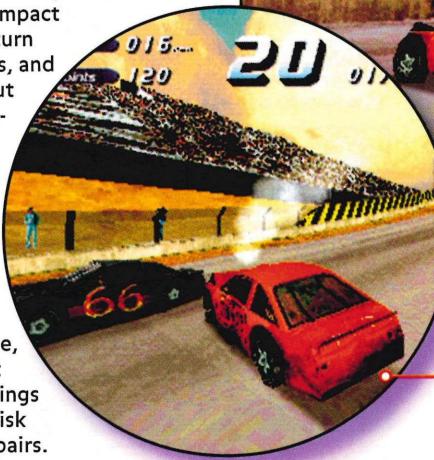
ably heavy rock track, and engine noises sampled from the bonnet of real cars – although when replaying the DAT tape, every few second the driver would swear profusely, thus rendering the sample unusable!





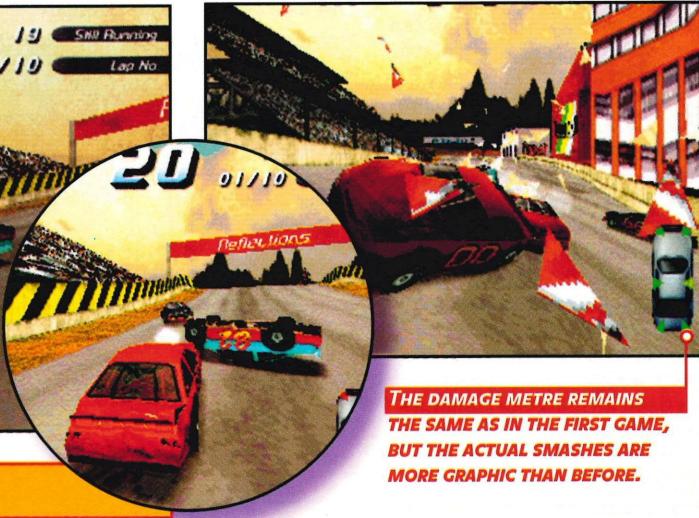
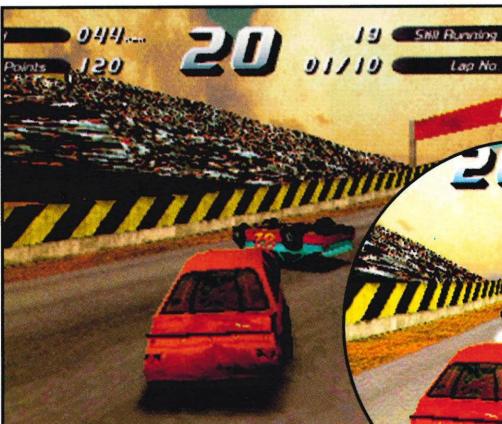
COWBOY JOB

Following *F1*'s lead, *Destruction Derby 2* is also set to house a pit lane for essential repairs! As in the first game, damage to the six vulnerable points of the player's car are shown via a series of coloured markers at the bottom-right of the screen. Initially, these markers are green, but change colour as each of the impact points is hit. As soon as they turn black, the car is on its last legs, and the next hit will put the car out of the race. The actual dynamics of how the pits will work has yet to be set, but Reflections are aiming for a timed stop, wherein the player is given scant seconds to work on majorly damaged parts of the vehicle. It also seems likely that drivers will be limited to one stop per race, thus making for a (very) slight strategic bent to the proceedings as players gauge whether to risk another knock or make for repairs.



DAMAGE CAN NOW BE
REPAIRED IN ONE OF THE PIT
LANES THE TRACKS OFFER.

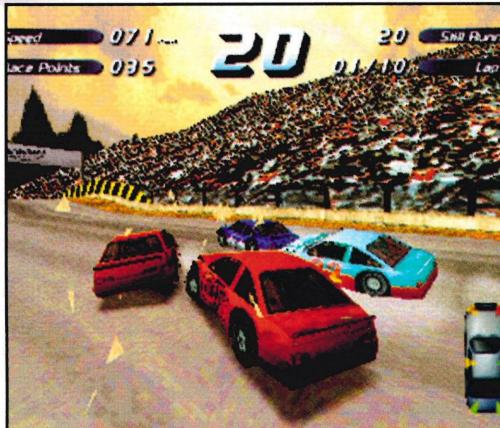
THE WIDER ROADS MAKE FOR
MORE IMPRESSIVE SMASHES,
AND FASTER RACES.



THE DAMAGE METRE REMAINS
THE SAME AS IN THE FIRST GAME,
BUT THE ACTUAL SMASHES ARE
MORE GRAPHIC THAN BEFORE.

JUST A LITTLE KNOCK

Considering its title, the first *Destruction Derby* was lacking in pile-ups during the race games. While the *Destruction Derby* bowls played host to some of the more visually arresting smashes, the occasional bumps and knocks in the race game were a trifle disappointing. The main addition to the sequel is that cars can now be rolled, with banked corners notoriously precarious for these – although a rolled car isn't necessarily out of the race, as a secondary shunt by another car can be used to roll them back on to their wheels. The first game's crashes were felt to be a bit lacking in impact, so the code for the impact dynamics has also been tightened, while the game's graphic artists have taken the chance to add sparks between two cars banging into the side of each other. Other effects also include more smoke, car fires, and debris flying on to the road after a really powerful collision. By far the most exciting possible addition, though, is still to be confirmed. Reflections are hoping to add a 'Caravan Racing' mode where the drivers tow caravans around the course and the aim is to have the last surviving mobile home. The graphical data for this would be enormous, but if it doesn't appear in *Destruction Derby 2* expect to see the code in a future release.



| | |
|---------|-------------|
| COMPANY | CODEMASTERS |
| RELEASE | SEPTEMBER |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| PLAYERS | 1-4 |
| GENRE | RACING GAME |



There are three major phases in a software house's existence. The first is producing a massive hit; the second is ensuring the obligatory sequel expands upon the first game while retaining the essence of playability that made the first game so popular; finally, with the constant change of hardware across the years, the third phase is to update the franchise to take advantage of the new possibilities afforded by more powerful hardware. While the majority of software houses often stumble at the second hurdle (the number of worthwhile sequels is pathetically small compared to the number released) there is one series of games which, across both handheld and home formats, has yet to disappoint.

For over eight years Codemasters' *Micro Machines* licence has been running and the popular brand of mini racers are now heading to the PlayStation in a game suitably turbo-charged to make the most of the Sony machine's superior palette and effects.

For those of you yet to experience the wonder of *Micro Machines*, allow us to fill you in the thrills you may have been missing. *Micro Machines* are today's version of the Dinky or Matchbox car sets. But smaller. Much, much smaller. In fact, the largest *Micro Machines* are barely an inch long, but their popularity is such that virtually every vehicle since the wheel has been recreated in miniature form. As such, in addition to the customary hot rods and jeeps, the *Micro Machines* licence has been expanded to cover all the latest films and licences — with mini versions of all the Star Wars TIE Fighters, X-Wings, A-Wings and Y-Wings sitting alongside shrunken versions of ships set to wow cinema audiences in the likes of *Independence Day* and *Mars Attacks*.

If the toys have passed you by, though, the Codemasters game could be the best way to relive a time when the garden path was your very own M25 for your dented Matchbox fleet in an era when a PlayStation was something Fisher Price made for the under twos.

Micro Machines V3



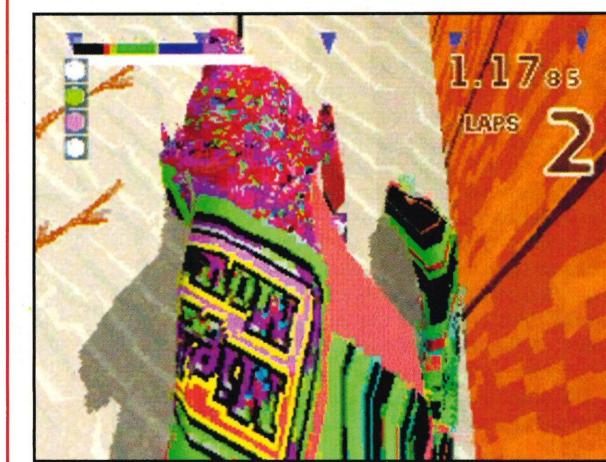
EACH OBSTACLE REACTS WITH A DIFFERENT SOUND EFFECT IF A CAR BUMPS INTO IT.



AN EXAMPLE OF THE 3D DEPTH IN ACTION. AS THE CARTON IS PASSED, THE ANGLE OF ELEVATION CHANGES.

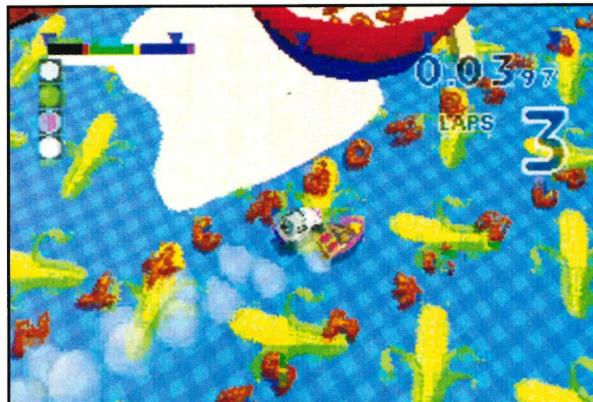


THE CHEESE RAMP, JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF HOW EVERY DAY ITEMS BECOME RACE FEATURES.



RULE OF THUMB (SIZE)

And now, a quick course in essential *Micro Machines* knowledge. Eight vehicles, four of which can be controlled by human participants, are left to whiz around three laps of a sprawling, eight-way-scrolling map using short cuts and general skill to make it first past the finishing line. However, with the cars being based on versions of existing *Micro Machines* — ie tiny boats, cars and hot rods — the backdrops are all based on household areas, such as gardens, kitchens and snooker tables, with the obstacles and hazards which pepper every stage based on themed objects relevant to each room. If a group race isn't to the player's liking, though, the game also sports an option to go head-to-head with a friend. To the left of the screen a tower of eight red and blue dots is stacked, with each player given four dots each. As the pair whizz around the courses, should the leader manage to gain such a lead that the second player's car is scrolled off screen, an extra coloured dot is added to their tally. When all eight dots have been coloured by one of the two, the winner is declared.



OBSTACLE COURSE

The new 3D perspective calls for far more interaction with the backdrops and obstacles than before, with the once flat cereal boxes now fleeting past with a superb parallax effect, and larger obstacles taking the form of animals, daffodils (indeed a full complement of flora), and assorted pieces of furniture. Each of the objects in the game (of which there are over one thousand!) have been created on SGi machines, and the

offices where Codemasters' graphics team works is littered with reference books about fauna, furniture, textures, and plants as they strive to make the objects as realistic as possible. Having built up the objects from a wire frame skeleton, they are then filled out and a separately-created 'skin' moulded around the object, while the necessary shading is handled by the PlayStation automatically from preset light points. With *Micro Machines* requiring speed to ensure it plays as well as possible, and the PlayStation renowned for object removal problems, a delicate balance has been struck between the number of obstacles the machine can handle while still ensuring the racers remain as nippy as possible.

COURSE CORRECTION

Previous incarnations of *Micro Machines* have been based on 2D play areas, with the cars skating across flat surfaces with the maps and obstacles seen from directly above. The PlayStation version, however, makes the brave break into the third dimension, with Codemasters making the most of the PlayStation's scaling capabilities to add depth to the play areas. Although the basic multi-directional scrolling and top-down view has been retained, the in-house development team have opted for a series of intelligent camera views and obstacles which allow the team to show off their programming finesse. As the levels are explored, the player is now lifted on to different planes, with the camera tracking the car as it struggles up an ironing board which doubles as a ramp, or using a conveniently-placed skateboard as a bridge to form crossover points. The original *Micro Machines* titles were famed for their simplicity, and it would be easy to over-egg the pudding with extra frills and ruin its basic playability but, if anything, the new graphical touches make the game even better. As the ramps are reached, the camera views switch perfectly to emphasise the car's struggle up hill, while leaping heroically from the top of a table to the floor below is tracked with stomach-lurching perfection.

ONE CAREFUL OWNER

The once flat *Micro Machines* have been given the 'Next Gen' treatment and fully rendered and modelled for their inclusion in the game's 3D world. Codemasters have even gone to the extent of employing a vehicle specialist, Ray Livens, who creates the mini racers using 3D packages, before adding their individual 'skins' to create the eight cars needed per race. PlayStation *Micro Machines* offers the player travels across land, sea and tables and, as such, each stage comes with the appropriate mode of transport. Pond racing calls for mini power boats, while 4x4s power across the orange juice and milk spills of the breakfast table, and dragsters cut through bath tubs like Jiff Microliquid. Each of the vehicles is controlled with the minimum of fuss, with two facia buttons handling the acceleration and reversing, and left and right Dpad motions steering. The superb control over the cars is one of the reason *Micro Machines* became such a success. As they whizz along, the barely sketched road markings throw corners when you least expect them, making for huge skids around corners and near death situations as both cars head for the edge of the table or some such chasm! Similarly, the skids can be turned to the player's advantage as the pair bump each other off the road or over the edge — which makes for one of the most engrossing two-player games imaginable.



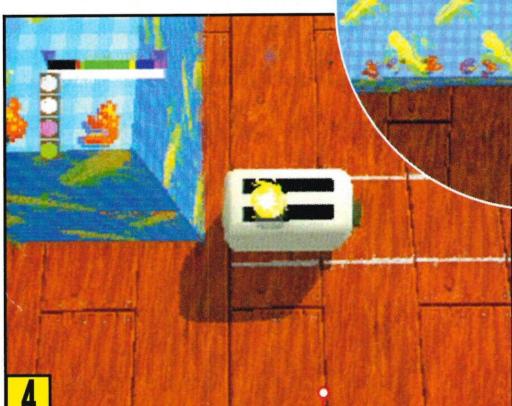
AND THIS IS THE KITCHEN...

The miniature motors are raced through assorted everyday settings which, due to the vehicles' diminutive size resemble sets from *Land of the Giants*. The final game is to feature over forty courses, taking the player on a grand tour of a specially created house as the cars, hovercraft and dragsters roar through bathrooms, gardens and conservatories. At the time of writing, seven courses are up and running with a selection of vehicles competing, but already a number of the other promised innovations are present. The garden, for example, takes the player up to a higher

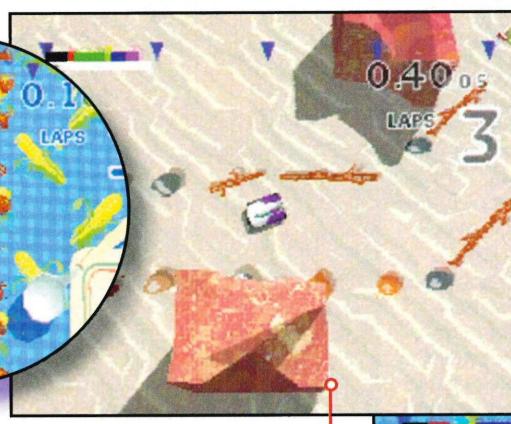
part of the rockery as the 4x4s use a skateboard as a ramp, while a pond level uses a stunning ripple effect to imply the reflections from the water. By far the most unique usage of the new 3D engine, however, takes place during a level provisionally entitled 'Toaster.' As the player strives to stay within the Coco Pops that act as road markers, the path ends at the side of a flip up toaster. Driving into the side of this, though, causes a slight break in the action as the toaster warms up before popping the red hot vehicle up in the air and on to the table edge above!



DURING THE POND LEVELS, THE ROUTE IS MARKED BY ARROW-SHAPED ALGAE FORMATIONS.



THE TOASTER IS ONE OF THE FIRST ADDITIONS TO BE UP AND RUNNING, AND THE EFFECT IS SUPERB.

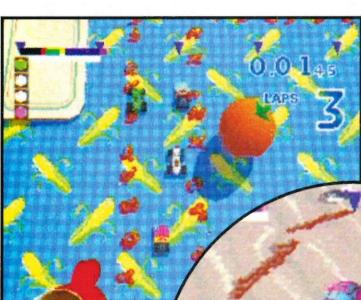
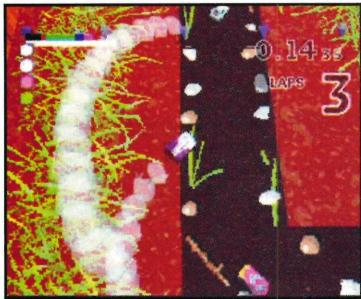
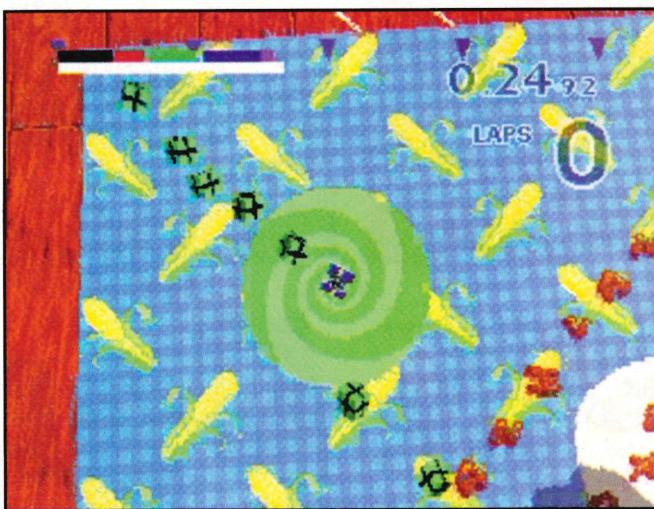


THE CURRENT CODE THROWS RANDOM VEHICLES INTO THE TRACKS, HENCE THE HOVERCRAFT/PATIO SCENARIO.



BULLETS OVER ROADWAY

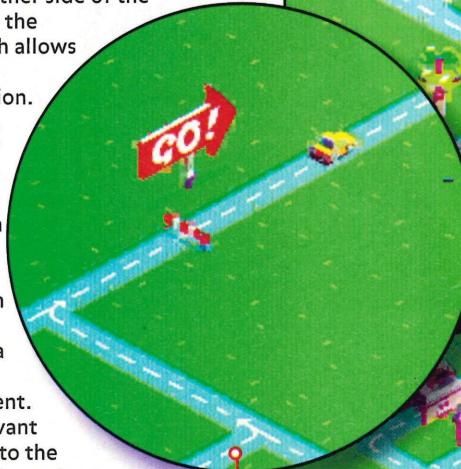
Following the decision to take *Micro Machines* into the third dimension, the developers have also expanded upon one of the smaller elements of the original 16bit game and added weapons to the vehicles. Before *Micro Machines* purists storm castle Codies with burning torches held aloft, the developers are quick to stress the weapons are in icon form and are only there as an optional extra – a last-ditch attempt at sending an opponent to their doom. On exploring the outer regions of some of the courses, the player will find a cluster of what appear to be crates, and running into these automatically endows the vehicle with its contents. These include invisibility potions, turbo boosts and – best of all – an extendible hand which is used to throw any cars within reach right to the back of the course, or even off it entirely! The decision to add such ideas came from wanting to expand upon the tanks in the 16bit code, but at the same time it was felt that too much emphasis was put on blowing each other up as opposed to racing in the original games so the new weapons last a few seconds before the action returns to normal.



OPTIONAL EXTRAS

In keeping with the toy theme, *Micro Machines* V3 opens with one of the best options screens we have ever seen. After the game has loaded, a tiny red car trundles across the screen and stops at a junction. To either side of the road are signs indicating the options or 'bypass' which allows the veteran user to head straight towards the action. On selecting the former, though, the car roars off into a screen featuring a series of car washes upon which are written a number of game modes. In addition to the head-to-head and competition modes, the player can test drive tracks, select a character from those on offer, or play a tournament. On highlighting the relevant option, the car roars off to the next set until the player is ready to start the race.

HAVING MADE THE CHOICE OF TOURNAMENT OR HEAD-TO-HEAD, THE CAR HEADS FOR A SECOND SET WHERE THE TRACKS CAN BE SELECTED. AFTER A BRIEF PAUSE, IT'S THEN STRAIGHT INTO THE GAME.



EFFECTUAL

One of the most ignored areas in most games is the sound, but Codemasters have busied themselves adding oddball samples and effects whenever possible. Tying in with the flexible camera angles, as the view pulls away from the vehicles – as they approach a long straight – the sound is reduced as the camera distances itself. Similarly, close ups are rewarded with a throaty growl which belies the small size of the vehicles and a suitably loud crash if two vehicles collide. With the obstacles made more interactive than in past versions, the sound is also used to this advantage with special effects added to objects if they are hit, with glass ringing and the two dormant pets which grace the house barking and meowing should a player bump into them.



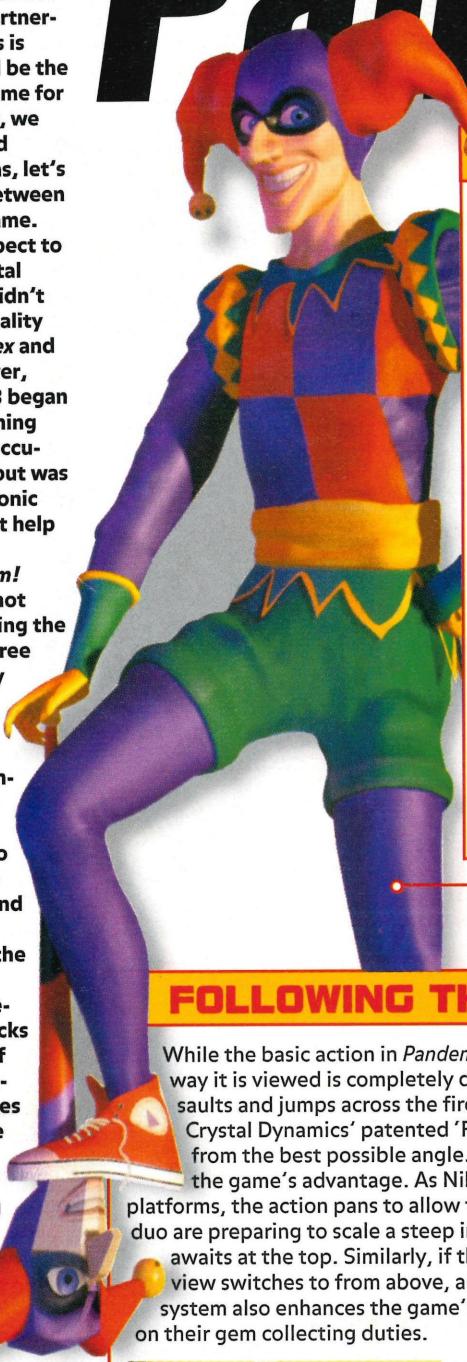
| | |
|---------|----------|
| COMPANY | BMG |
| RELEASE | OCTOBER |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| PLAYERS | 1 |
| GENRE | PLATFORM |



Following *Cheesy the Mouse's* pseudo-3D play area, and *Floating Runner's* polygon-based foray into the third dimension, BMG Interactive's partnership with Crystal Dynamics is ready to unveil what could be the first truly '3D' platform game for the Sony beast. Ordinarily, we try to remain objective and impartial in our reviews as, let's face it, a lot can change between early code and the final game. However, with all due respect to BMG and the guys at Crystal Dynamics, we genuinely didn't expect anything of this quality considering the likes of *Gex* and *Total Eclipse Turbo*. However, when murmurings from E3 began recounting tales of a stunning platformer that not only occupied a true 3D landscape but was fast enough to keep the Sonic brigade happy we couldn't help but follow it up.

So, here is *Pandemonium!* (their exclamation mark, not mine). At the time of writing the code consists of barely three levels and an introductory map sequence, but already the bare bones of a true 'Next Gen' platformer are gelling together. Whereas *Cheesy the Mouse* (and any other platform game you care to mention) is seen from the customary side-on view and shifts the scenery around the sprite as opposed to the other way round, *Pandemonium!* uses a free-flowing camera which tracks the action from a series of swooping angles – ie panning around the two heroes as they rush up stairs. The code we have seen is roughly 30% complete, and at the time of writing the developers have yet to finalise a scenario or reason for the pairs' trip through the hellish worlds, but Crystal Dynamics are currently working overtime to cram in as many proposed ideas before the September coding deadline. BMG are aiming for an October/November release, so you'll truly be able to say it's really going to be *Pandemonium!* on your PlayStation this Christmas (groan)...

Pandemonium!



MORPH THE MERRIER

With the emphasis on the magical nature of the two heroes, it comes as no surprise that both can morph into animals to further their quest. Just as Fergus is the slightly slower of the two but makes up for it with his more powerful spell-casting, the jester can morph into a kevlar-covered turtle – the beast world equivalent of his slower, but better protected human form. Nikki's fleet of foot equivalent is a little stranger, though, as she turns into a stampeding rhino, which is capable of smashing through virtually any obstacles in her path.

Fergus is the more magically adept of the two heroes.



NIKKI LEGS IT ACROSS THE SCREEN IN HER HUMAN FORM (TOP), AND AS A TURTLE (BELOW).

FOLLOWING THROUGH

While the basic action in *Pandemonium!* will be undeniably familiar to the hardened console owner, the way it is viewed is completely different from existing precedents. As the player's sprite runs, somersaults and jumps across the fire pits, chasms and water hazards that make up the game's obstacles, Crystal Dynamics' patented 'Freestyle 3D Camera Technology' system is on hand to show the game from the best possible angle. Cynicism aside, though, it is a stunning system that truly does work to the game's advantage. As Nikki and Fergus scale slopes, clamber up stairs and jump between tiny platforms, the action pans to allow them the best possible views at any time. For example, if either of the duo are preparing to scale a steep incline, the camera draws back to allow the player a better view of what awaits at the top. Similarly, if the next stage of platforms take the form of small stepping stones, the view switches to from above, allowing the requisite pixel-perfect jumps to be planned in advance. The system also enhances the game's feeling of speed, with the camera chasing both sprites as they embark on their gem collecting duties.



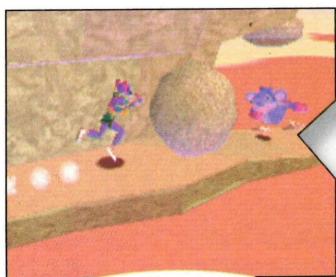
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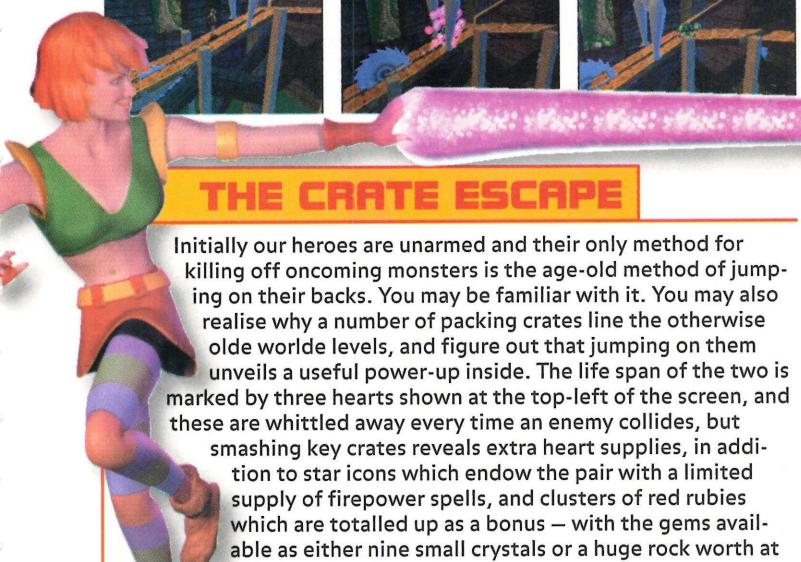
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3



um!



THE CRATE ESCAPE

Initially our heroes are unarmed and their only method for killing off oncoming monsters is the age-old method of jumping on their backs. You may be familiar with it. You may also realise why a number of packing crates line the otherwise olde worlde levels, and figure out that jumping on them unveils a useful power-up inside. The life span of the two is marked by three hearts shown at the top-left of the screen, and these are whittled away every time an enemy collides, but smashing key crates reveals extra heart supplies, in addition to star icons which endow the pair with a limited supply of firepower spells, and clusters of red rubies which are totalled up as a bonus – with the gems available as either nine small crystals or a huge rock worth at least thirty points.



JESTER MINUTE

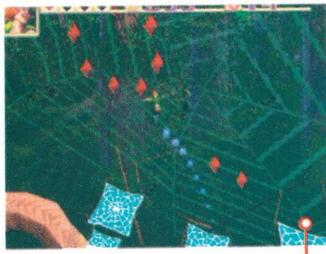
Although it is bound to be a classic tale of good against evil, the developers at Crystal Dynamics have yet to confirm plot specifics for *Pandemonium!* What limited information is available merely fleshes out the two heroes, with the player opting to control a psychotic jester answering to the name of Fargus, or a lithe acrobat called Nikki. Both are capable of pretty much the same running and jumping skills, but Fargus is more adept at using the fireball spells which are used to see off oncoming foes, with his jester's stick – which has a pyromaniac fetish and is called Sid, apparently – used to bolster his magical powers. Nikki, on the other hand, is described as a wizard's protege and thus her magical skills aren't quite as potent as those of the Fargus and Sid pairing, although she can clear larger expanses through a combination of Dpad manipulations following which she pulls off a stunning somersault.



THE 3D IS SUPERB, AS SHOWN AS FARGUS SCALES THE STAIRS.



POWER-UPS TAKE THE FORM OF HEARTS AND DIAMONDS. THE FORMER REPLENISH ANY LOST ENERGY (UP TO A MAXIMUM OF THREE), WHILE THE DIAMONDS ACT AS A MARIO-STYLE INCENTIVE, WITH AN EXTRA LIFE AWARDED IF FARGUS OR NIKKI MANAGE TO ACCUMULATE OVER 100.



THE ENLARGED BACKDROPS MAKE NATURAL OBJECTS SEEM DANGEROUS.

INTO THE THIRD DIMENSION

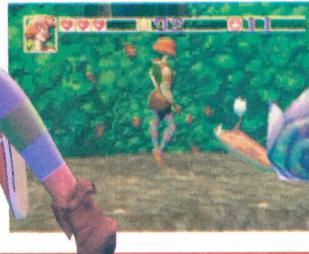
With *Pandemonium!* boasting a true 3D world, it shows off its advanced techniques to the full, by creating a number of planes for the game to cross. For example, during the pairs' trip through the workings of a factory they are dragged in and out of the screen as they ride on a series of conveyor belts, while a trip to the sandy wastes of the game's obligatory desert landscape sees the pair traversing a series of tunnels which move the player to a ledge nearer the player's viewpoint. The effect is very impressive indeed, and even the most basic levels are given further depth by subtle changes in the camera position, which indicate the road Nikki or Fargus are taking is veering off to the left or right — or directly into the player's view.



THE MONSTERS BEHAVE INTELLIGENTLY, AND WILL OFTEN ONLY ATTACK IF DISTURBED.

TALKING CANDIDLY

The only possible blight on *Pandemonium!*'s horizon we can foresee is Crystal Dynamics' decision to add speech to the game. Having winced all the way through Gex's 'hilarious' Americanisms of 'howdy-doodies' and whatever, the promise of 300 'side-splitting' samples is a little daunting. According to BMG, the samples are being added to the game to bring the characters to life (as if the stunning animation didn't do that already), and Nikki will be on hand with a host of sarcastic quips and caustic comments, while Fargus will natter away with Sid, his psychotic jester's stick. The voices are about to be added to the next version of the code, so we hope to be proved wrong and that the celebrity samples won't be annoying at all. Bated breath it is, then...



THE FOREST LEVEL IS PARTICULARLY INGENIOUS, WITH THE TWISTING CAMERAS LEADING THE PLAYER UP AND INTO TREES.

WORLDS IN MOTION

The version of the code we played featured three worlds, although the final game is expected to feature nearer forty. The pair begin the game on a parchment map marked with relevant locations, and move on to the next area when the end of the current level is completed. Each mission begins and ends on what appears to be a wooden teleport pad, and the three playable levels in the early demo were set in a forest, the insides of a big wooden factory, and a desert wasteland reminiscent to that of Stargate. The hazards and monsters are similarly themed, with the forest playing host to spiny snails, goo-spitting reptiles and a host of insects, while extra lift for jumps can be effected through the use of trampoline-cum-spider webs, and short cuts can be made to higher levels through hollow tree trunks. The desert level, on the other hand, is inhabited by large pack dogs, more insects and chitinous creatures, while extra lift is available through sandstorms which move Nikki and Fargus high into the air. By far the most impressive level, though, is the factory. As the two pick their way to the end, a gauntlet of band saws and conveyor belts must be run, with the 3D elements further emphasised as pendulum blades swish in and out of the screen.



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our price

| | |
|---------|-----------|
| COMPANY | SONY |
| RELEASE | NOVEMBER |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| PLAYERS | 1 |
| GENRE | ADVENTURE |



If video game players are perceived as anorak-wearing geeks with minimal social skills and plentiful skin complaints, then pity the poor adventure game fan. Just as games players are generalised as morons with lightning reflexes and anal retentive attitudes, the same categories are pinned on fans of adventure games and people whose idea of getting away from it all involves rolling strange-shaped dice in a quest for the love of a fair maiden or enhanced spell-casting abilities. But in the last year or so, the evolution of the adventure as a form of video game entertainment has brought it bang up to date, with the likes of Lucasarts, Sierra and Revolution expanding the basic idea of puzzle-solving into the closest gamers currently have to the much sought-after 'interactive movie.'

The earliest adventures date back to Sir Clive Sinclair's ZX81 machine, with the player dropped into a text-based world of dragons and orcs where one message would read : "you find a sword", followed by "take sword." Having stretched the grey cells, a dragon would then appear, and the player would struggle with the likes of "kill dragon with sword", "kill dragon" or "run away" before being met with a frustrating "you cannot do that" message and instant fiery death. It was "slay dragon" all along, you see.

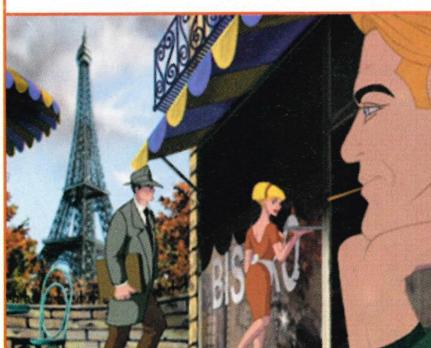
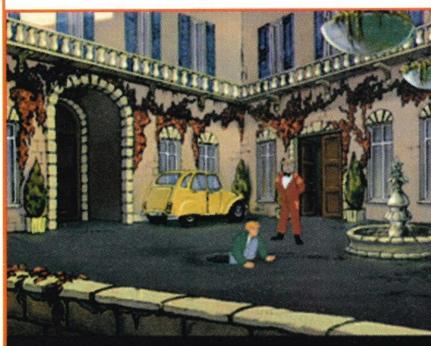
As machines progressed, there was scope for adventure games to grow. Melbourne House's *The Hobbit* was one of the first games to feature graphical representations of some of the locations, while Bug Byte's *Twin Kingdom Valley* went one better with a picture every location. Similarly, no longer were players limited to battling against dragons, with AdventureSoft introducing stories starring The Incredible Hulk and a host of Marvel heroes. As the 16bit era began, though, and floppy discs became the norm, Lucasarts broke into new territory by negating the need for lengthy typing to solve problems. Games like *Maniac Mansion* and *Indiana Jones* replaced typing with a 'point 'n' click' interface which allowed the player to highlight key words like 'Use', 'Take' and 'Open' and then click on the object the action required.

This icon-based interface has remained a preferred choice through countless PC titles and has been refined over and over again. It is now set to grace the PlayStation for the first time, as the Sony machine proves its versatility by entering a genre dominated by huge Pentium-based PCs and high-powered Macs. So forget any preconceptions about the PlayStation being limited to 3D shoot 'em ups, as 'Next Gen' fans are to get a bite of the adventure cherry as Revolution's *Broken Sword* makes its interactive debut.

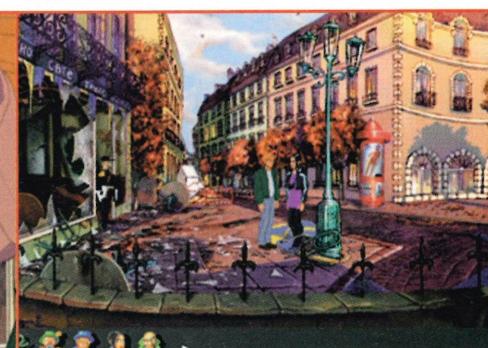
Broken Sword



A TIME OF HEROES



In the tradition of great spy adventures, *Broken Sword* opens with an initially small mystery which duly expands into a story of fascists and world domination. The star of the game and the player's on-screen alter ego is George Stobbard, an American holidaying in Paris. Since his arrival, George feels he has been treated with something akin to suspicion but feels he cannot back up his gut feeling. However, while flirting with a waitress as he stops off at a cafe, he is amazed as an accordion-playing clown waltzes after a grey-haired man and returns a few seconds later clutching the man's case. As George rises to see if the man is okay, the cafe is ripped apart by a huge explosion although George escapes relatively unhurt. The police arrive followed by a reporter, and George is questioned and then free to go. Exploring the area, the mystery deepens as George finds the dead body of the grey-haired man the clown was chasing. The game then opens with a series of puzzles as George turns detective and traces the clown to a hotel room where he finds the contents of the case — a mediaeval manuscript detailing the power of the fabled Knights Templar. Stealing the documents and taking his story to Nico, the aforementioned reporter, George becomes embroiled in a mystery which will put him in constant danger.



SO YOU WANT A REVOLUTION?



CHARLES CECIL (THIRD FROM LEFT) AND THE REVOLUTION TEAM: MY, HOW YOU'VE GROWN IN THE LAST TWO YEARS.

Broken Sword is only the second game to emerge from developers Revolution, but their pedigree is beyond reproval. Their first release was an Amiga and PC title called *Lure of the Temptress* which was released to much acclaim in 1992. An icon-drive adventure, the game was one of the best of its kind for the Amiga, but in 1994 the team went one better. Working together with 2000AD artist, Dave Gibbons, the fledgling company created *Beneath a Steel Sky* for Virgin, an adventure for the PC and Amiga which added speech and a stunningly black-humoured plot to the genre, along with visuals from Gibbons that gave it the feel of an interactive comic book. Since then, the team has expanded to take on the work load of *Broken Sword*, and it's odds-on that George Stobbard will return for fresh adventures.



A WORK OF ART

Much is made of the quest for an interactive movie, and it seems as if the adventure genre as a whole is going to get closer than the likes of the *Wing Commander* series or FMV 'movies.' *Broken Sword* has an all-star back room team with the script edited by a senior BBC writer, the sprites animated by artists who have worked on Don Bluth's *All Dogs Go To Heaven II* and *Balto* cartoons, while the sound has been composed by Barrington Pheloung whose past career includes music for *Inspector Morse* and *Truly, Madly, Deeply*. In addition to shifting camera angles and music which ties in with the on-screen goings-on, *Broken Sword*'s movie atmosphere is enhanced with animated cut scenes wherein the viewer can eavesdrop on events essential to the plot, or simply witness a terse phone call between George and Nico — and, of course, the assassination of the grey-haired man at the start of the game.

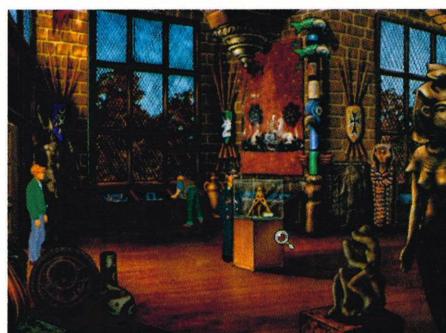
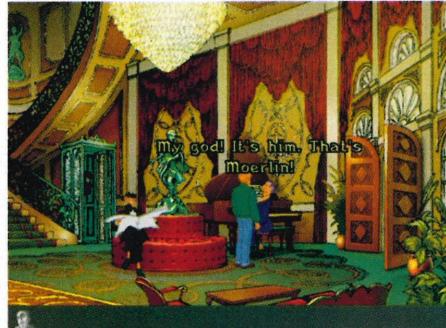


DETECTION MADE EASY

Broken Sword uses a variation of the 'point 'n' click' control system used in the majority of recently-released adventures. Using either the mouse or the joypad, a small cursor is moved across the screen to move a cross hair and if an important object is highlighted, the cursor changes to one of a number of icons. These include legs which will prompt George to walk across the room, an eye to look at an object, or a hand to pick something up. This system proves very instinctive to use, and swooping the cursor across the screen allow the player to get a good overview of the screen without a constant battle against a dodgy text parser.

As George's mission progresses he collects all manner of objects which may assist his quest, and these are found through an inventory list summoned with a press of one of the mouse or facia buttons. From here, highlighting the required object and clicking the 'use' button drags it into the play area.

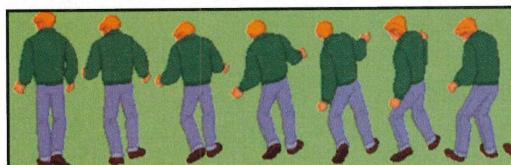
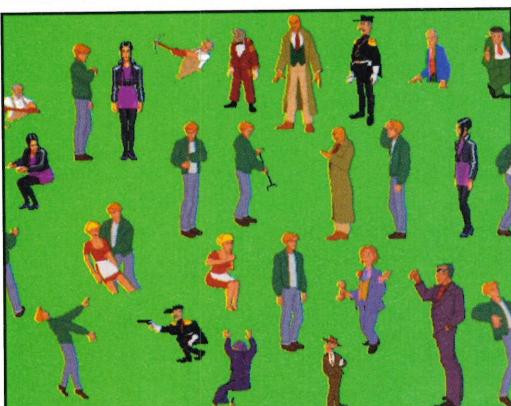
Then moving the collected object to the part of the screen where it is needed will automatically attempt to use it for a given task — a key for unlocking a door, for example.



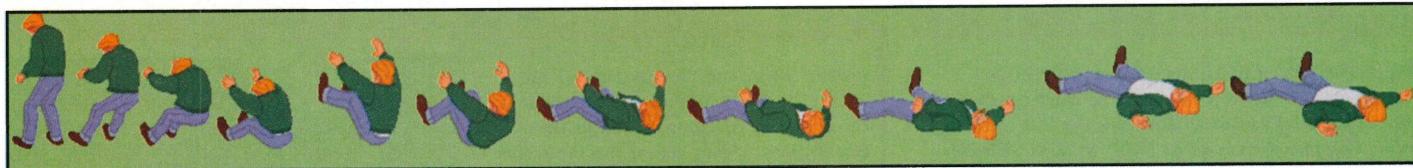
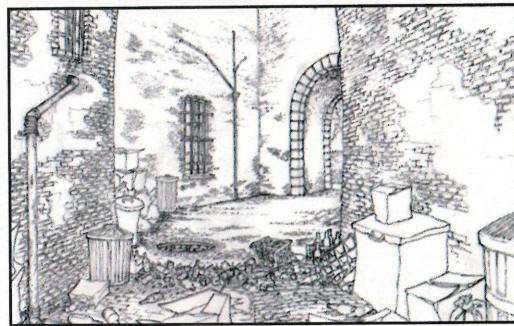
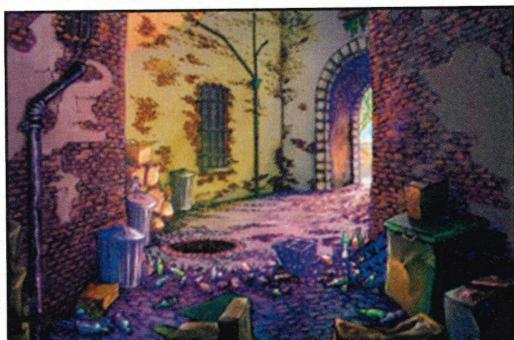
GETTING UP TO THE CLOWN'S ROOM INVOLVES NEGOTIATION AND MORE THAN A LITTLE SUBTLETY.



MOVING ON UP

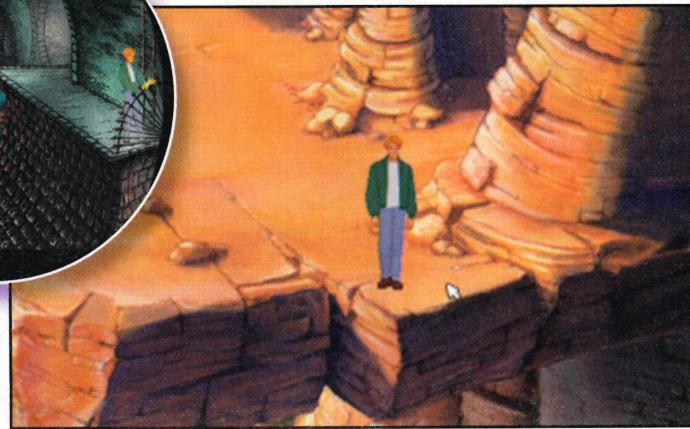
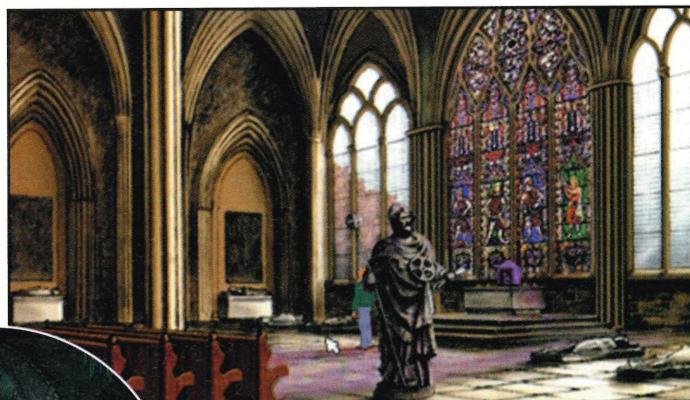


The game's rooms and scenes are played across areas which span up to four screens in width. As George explores, the play area scrolls to keep track, and he has free movement to examine or interact with any part of the screen. The screens have been created as high resolution backdrops, and the sprites are then dropped on top. Each sprite is animated with hundreds of frames, making George one of the most versatile heroes ever seen. He runs, jumps, fights and falls over as well as any arcade game counterparts. These animations prove memory intensive, and data is constantly streamed from the CD as Nico and the host of support characters make appearances and go through equally impressive motions.



TEMPLAR DOOM

The backdrops are some of the most intricate in an adventure game, and take George from the bustling Paris cafe scene to the seedy underworld where the true battle for the knowledge of the Knights Templar takes place. Following the trip up to the Clown's hotel room, George and Nico's quest for the truth takes them on train journeys, through deserts, and into a museum where information on the Knights Templar can be found. On this point, Revolution have tried to emulate the success of the Indiana Jones films by keeping one of *Broken Sword's* feet firmly in the realm of history. The Knights Templar – AKA The Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon – actually existed and were warrior monks who would kill anyone in the name of God. It is also said that they stood guard over the Holy Grail itself, and while more is learned of the Knights' cause as the adventure unfolds, the sinister nature of the theft of the manuscript at the start of the game is revealed to be a plot which shift the balance of power into the hands of evil...



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|---------|-----------|
| COMPANY | MINDSCAPE |
| RELEASE | OCTOBER |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| PLAYERS | 1-8 |
| GENRE | RACING |



With Codemasters about to unveil the next generation of their popular *Micro Machines* licence on the PlayStation, its release has been preceded by a worse war of words than the verbal sparring between Oasis's Liam Gallagher and Blur's Damon Albarn. It all started a few month back when the first pictures of Mindscape's *Supersonic Racers* appeared in magazines such as ours, along with the line 'from the creators of *Micro Machines*'.

No sooner could you say 'breach of copyright' than a fax appeared from Codemasters' HQ stating that the programmers were still working for them so how could they be working for Mindscape? From here, things went from odd to confusing. "If we didn't develop *Micro Machines*, then how come we got loads of royalty cheques in our name from Codemasters?" stated a quote from the *Supersonic Racers* team. Needless to say, just as Liam and Damon made up after the 'Quoasis' slanging match, it has all gone quiet on the top-down racer front. Mindscape's game is provisionally pencilled in for an October release, though, a date which is set to clash with the release of the Codemasters game, so even if the war of words has ended, the battle of the buggies is set to run and run.

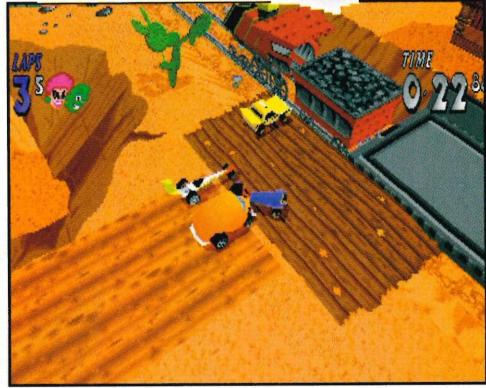
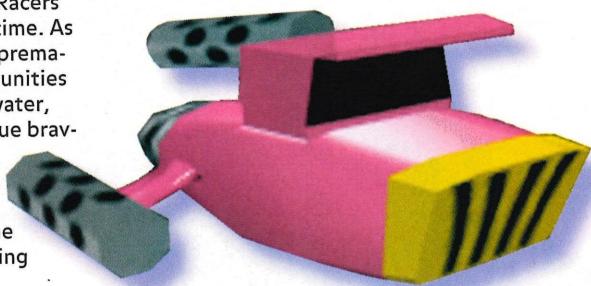
To be honest, the 'who developed what' argument was a tad pointless, although it has to be said that there are more than a few similarities between the two titles. *Micro Machines V3* can be found on Page 32 of this very issue, and we can now unveil more details of Mindscape's *Supersonic Racers* to assist those game players who find it hard to make up their mind.

Supersonic Racers is a top-down racer, in which the player guides one of a number of morphing vehicles across a series of scrolling areas. Rather than a selection of familiar but oversized obstacles, though, the *Supersonic Racers* team have invited the player to travel the world and race through jungles, over sea, and in cities against seven mates or a host of CPU-controlled cars. So, revving the engines via the PlayStation's X button, let's forget the verbal battle and take the Mindscape game out for a test drive...

Supersonic Racers

MULTIPLE CHOICES

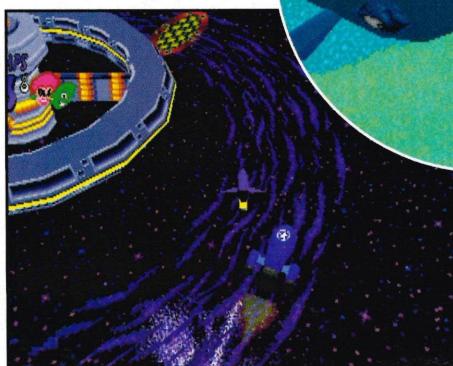
Courtesy of two multi-taps, *Supersonic Racers* also supports eight players at the same time. As the participants battle it out for road supremacy, the courses present plenty of opportunities to knock a fellow racer into a chasm or water, and bridges and narrow bends call for true bravery and fast reflexes on the player's part. If, however, things aren't going well for you, a 'carrier' vehicle appears to transport stragglers to the front of the group, and this proves handy for bypassing seemingly impossible sections.



THE WORLD'S A STAGE

The code previewed features six early tracks, based on the wild west, a jungle landscape, the deep sea, and a bustling city. Each course is set across an eight-way-scrolling play area, with the vehicle tearing past hazards themed to each backdrop. The final game is expected to feature thirty stages, with the development team planning backdrops based on a haunted house, a

space station and the North Pole. However, in a neat twist on the idea, *Supersonic Racers*' vehicles have been given morphing abilities which allow them to adapt to the conditions the courses present. The sea-based stage is a perfect example of this, as closer inspection of the cars' wheels reveals they have been replaced with huge inflated tyres for extra buoyancy.



ON THE MOVE

Supersonic Racers pits the player against a number of CPU-controlled opponents each of whom bears an uncanny resemblance to the many *Wacky Races* heroes and villains. To paraphrase countless Perry and Croft 'comedies', "you will be watching":

SLOTH AND MARTHA

A Cruella DeVille-style hag and her bizarre alien partner — complete with obligatory henchman hunched back. Martha's the leader of the pair, but what her car has in fast acceleration it lacks in general speed.



VAROUKA

Verouka's cutesy little girl exterior is blown to pieces as it is revealed she drives a huge truck! The weight of the vehicle makes it good at cornering, and it also compares very favourably in the speed stakes.

JOHNNY

The Peter Perfect of *Supersonic Racers*, complete with his glitzy dragster. As befits a car used to whizzing up and down mud straights, Johnny's car is extremely fast, but it's rather light body weight makes it terrible at cornering.



OSWALD

An escaped convict, complete with stereotypical arrowed suit. His van looks suspiciously like a prison vehicle, but is one of the weaker vehicles with minimal acceleration and top speed.



DOCTOR DIABOLICAL

If Johnny is Peter Perfect, Doc Diabolical is Mindscape's equivalent of Dick Dastardly. The fastest driver of the group, and the speed is never compromised as the vehicle corners beautifully.



LUCY

Lucy is another good all-rounder. Lucy's chosen mode of transport is an orange van which has been girlied up with eyelashes on the headlights, but is more than adequate in the speed and handling stakes.



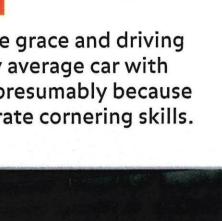
NUKUM

We've had Peter Perfect and Dick Dastardly clones, and now we have a version of the Army Surplus Special vehicle. Nukum is a soldier driving an army jeep, and another more than capable all-rounder for the player to select.



DUNKUM

A New York cabbie, with all the grace and driving skills to match. Another barely average car with little in the way of top speed (presumably because the meter's running), but moderate cornering skills.



DARKNESS is a state of MIND



| | |
|---------|-----------|
| COMPANY | MINDSCAPE |
| RELEASE | SEPTEMBER |
| PRICE | £44.99 |
| PLAYERS | 1 |
| GENRE | RACING |



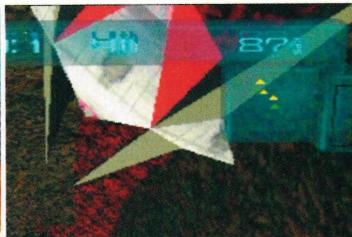
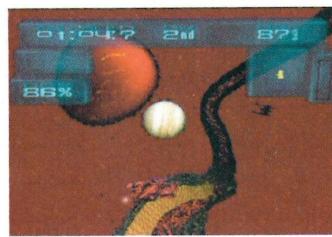
ife is full of useless things. Deeply Boppers, the Remington Fuzz-Away, fag holders

that allow smokers to drag on ten cigarettes simultaneously. They're all pretty pointless, but not quite as ridiculous as a racing game complete with an in-depth storyline. The objective of practically every driving game under the sun is to pass the finishing line in first place, so why bother bolting on an immaterial scenario that has no relevance to the game whatsoever?

Whether the aim is to save mankind by winning races or if it's just the personal satisfaction of taking first prize, *Starwinder* is racing game that's a far cry from the *Ridge Racer*'s that the PlayStation is so familiar with. It's set in outer space for starters, and is similar to *WipeOut* in that the competitors fly futuristic skimmers rather than cars. The similarities end there though, because the races don't take place across circuits as such, instead they run along stretching 'rails', huge rock tunnels that spiral through space. Even weirder are the drivers of the other vehicles, a mixture of bizarre aliens ranging from hulking rhinos to shapeless blobs.

And you? You're an ordinary Earthling, one Connor Rhodes. As a newcomer to the sport of Starwinding your objective is simple - to win the championship which, if you're even vaguely in the story line, will uncover the mysteries of the missing 44th Rail. Hmmm, suddenly it all becomes clear...

Starwinder



DANGEROUS OBSTACLES LIKE HUGE ROCK BOULDERS AND EXPLOSIVE MINES OFTEN LITTER THE TRACK.

OFF THE RAILS



THINGS GET AWFULLY TIGHT WHEN SPEEDING DOWN THESE RACE RAILS!

PICK ME UPS

Each ship is equipped with a handful of weapons systems, from weedy laser blasters to the all-powerful plasma cannon. A limited supply of ammunition is packed inside each ship, although stocks can be replenished by picking up any of the power-ups that are scattered along each circuit.



VARIOUS BONUSES ARE AVAILABLE INCLUDING SPEED BOOSTS (TOP) AND EXTRA AMMUNITION (ABOVE).

Okay, the story behind *Starwinder* goes something like this. 117 million years ago something stirred in the galaxy. Quite what this thing was nobody knows, but it started to build the rail. Dotted throughout the Solar System, each rail is completely unique and is built from rocks extracted from nearby planets, but the purpose of these formations was unknown. A use was eventually found for them though, and soon they were transformed into giant race tracks over which the *Starwinder* championship is set. 43 civilisations fight for the coveted *Starwinder* title and the chance to keep the Starsphere, a near-perfect globe assembled from 43 pieces, with just one piece missing. Only the ultimate victor has the key to complete the sacred globe.



PLAYERS HAVE A CHOICE OF FIVE SHIPS, SOME OF WHICH ARE SLOW BUT HANDLE WELL AND OTHERS THAT ARE EXTREMELY FAST BUT SKID OUT EASILY.

WISH YOU WERE SPHERE



Throughout the game, rendered cutscenes are used to detail the player's progress, showing how well they're doing compared to the other competitors and also piecing together the fragments of the Starsphere as they're won. Virtual television presenter Barlow Lenz also interviews the winners and losers of the previous race which, although not affecting the starting positions of the next race, does inject a bit of spirit into the game.

WIND AND DINED

One of *Starwinder*'s most breath-taking features is the number of tracks it boasts, with some 44 circuits crammed into the racing season. The rails are, if you will, a space-age gutter-pipe that stretches into the distance, plagued by twisting turns and vicious bumps that can easily toss the drivers out into the vast emptiness of space. While negotiating the obstacles each of the competitors must stay close to the track as the lava stream that runs along each of the rails provides power to the skimmers – keep low to increase speed or, if the going gets a little too tough, pull back to slow down.



KEEPING CLOSE TO THE RED LAVA STREAM AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CIRCUIT IS ALL-IMPORTANT TO MAINTAINING TOP SPEED.

TROUBLE
arrives in
THREE
dimensions



| | |
|---------|----------|
| COMPANY | EA |
| RELEASE | NOVEMBER |
| PRICE | TBA |
| PLAYERS | 1-4 |
| GENRE | RACING |



You may have noticed a slight racing bent to this issue of

PlayStation Plus. No sooner does F1 drive up for review (see Page 18) than a veritable slew of titles in a similar vein arrive. From *Motor Toon Grand Prix II* (Page 90) to *Destruction Derby II* (Page 28). *Micro Machines V3* (Page 32) to *Supersonic Racers* (Page 44). Hell, even the latest *Namco Museum* offers up *Pole Position II* (see Page 80). And with *Andretti Racing*, EA's dipped its toe into the vast pond that is pumping valves.

With helpful comments by the three Andrettis themselves (Michael, Jeff and, of course, Mario), the game is aimed at both experienced racers and complete novices. It's designed, apparently, as something you can't really go wrong with, utilising multiple cars, tracks, variations and even some nifty in-game reports from the pros themselves.

Whether of course the PlayStation actually needs yet another racing game is a moot point – every single one that comes along claims to offer something new (some actually do, most don't) but there's no avoiding the fact that the little buggers are incredibly popular. So, without further ado, let the checkered flag drop and on with the race...

Andretti Racing



BEHIND THE WHEEL



FLY ON THE WINDSCREEN

Or indeed any other kind of problem with your vehicle, and you can slide neatly into the pits, where your trained team of mechanics will restore you to optimum capacity. As you get

more used to the car and the style of driving you need, you learn how to fine tune your necessary upgrades to minimise the time spent there and maximise your time on the tracks.

There are three different driving perspectives on offer, presenting a variety of opportunities to knock the other players out of the way. The overhead view gives a good localised perspective of the overall race, but makes fine twisting and turning slightly awkward. Inside the car is great for Indy competitions and gives a good realistic feel of driving, but to be frank, the best of all is the traditional just-behind-the-car's-bum, where both good views and excellent handling join together to make for a jolly good romp around the various courses.

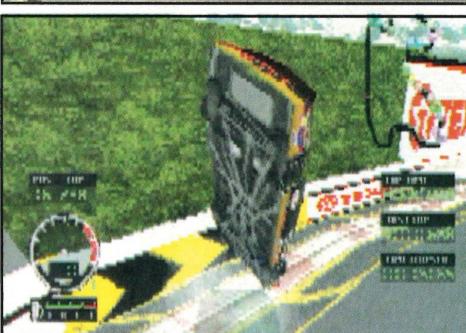
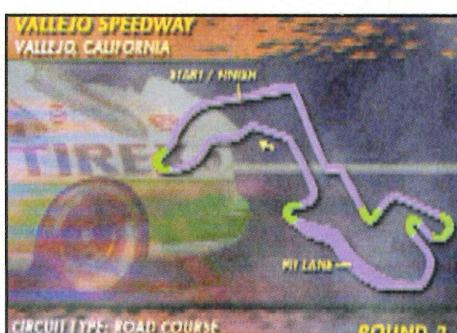
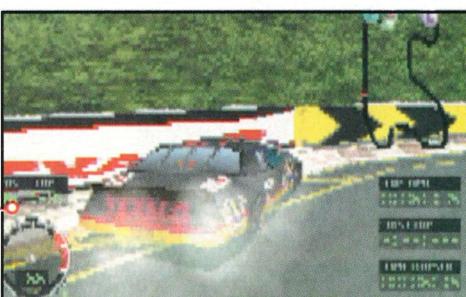


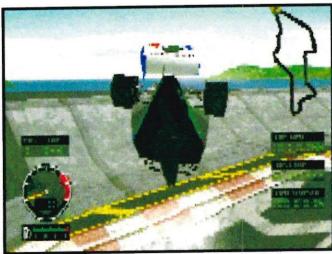
GET YOUR KICKS... ON ROUTE... 16

With sixteen different tracks, including three licensed Street tracks and a licensed Oval one as well. You can play straight Indy car racing or have more fun with the Stock variants. Watch pieces of your car fly away as you thump another vehicle. See the highly detailed underside if you're really unfortunate and flip over. Watch as slowly but

surely the sleek, smooth lines that the racer starts out with become battered, dented and chipped by the time it's all over.

AN UNHEALTHY MIX OF NAIVE DRIVING AND THUMPING OTHER CARS TENDS TO GET YOU FLIPPED OVER MORE THAN JUST OCCASIONALLY.





AN EXCITING, IF MORALLY SUSPICIOUS, WAY TO WIN IS TO CHEAT. JUST NUDGE THE OTHER DRIVERS INTO THE CRASH BARRIERS.



YOUR CAR STARTS OFF SPICK AND SPAN, BUT A FEW BUMPS LATER AND YOU NEED A BODY-REPAIR SHOP.



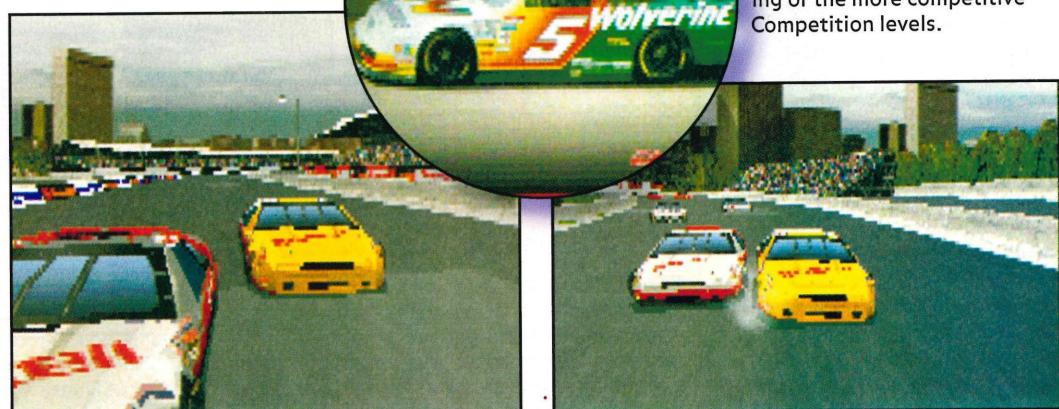
EVERYTHING THE ANDRETTI'S KNOW ABOUT THE SPORT CAN BE GLEANED FROM THEIR INTERVIEWS WITH JAMES BROWN.

WORLD IN MY EYES

The in-game commentary comes from two of ESPN's most charismatic race commentators, Derek Daly and Bob Jenkins, while each game is introduced with suave charm and wit by Fox Sports' James Brown. Brown also hosts interviews with the brothers Andretti, discussing different aspects of both the game, the cars and driving in general. Mario, in particular, offers good insights into the whole racing kit and kaboodle.



GET THE BALANCE RIGHT



There are two main designs of car available, although there are minor variations within each group in terms of colour, decals etc. Basically, for Stock racing you use your common-or-garden rally car, and for the Indy circuits, along comes the speedy little traditional motor racing car. The main menu gives you everything you need to know about the cars (including the ability to change between manual and automatic transmission – very handy for racing game beginners), while also offering you the opportunity to create a career in racing either by selecting the Career mode, or simply opting for basic racing or the more competitive Competition levels.

It's PAY BACK time



| | |
|---------|-----------|
| COMPANY | ACCLAIM |
| RELEASE | SEPTEMBER |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| PLAYERS | 1-2 |
| GENRE | PLATFORM |



Once again gaming history is being pillaged as two aging heroes are dragged kicking and screaming over to the 'Next Gen' PlayStation. After a Sony initiation of sorts in *Bust A Move 2*, Bub and Bob – Taito's stars of three arcade titles – have been ported lock, stock and barrel to the PlayStation to take on the curators of Namco's museums and to fight for the retro attention of the contestants of those arcade classics. Thus, as the advertising bigwigs throw out lines like 'playability like it used to be' and 'a classic slice of arcade history', players over the age of 25 can take yet another wander down a rapidly eroded memory lane.

Actually we're being a tad unfair. Of all the old games released to date, *Bubble Bobble* and its sequel, *Rainbow Islands* (the pairing on Acclaim's CD) are two of the greatest platform games to date. Before Mario tasted his first mushroom, and when hedgehogs and bandicoots were just that, Bub and Bob ruled the roost. In a series of adventures spanning six years and a similar number of home formats, the pair started out as bubble-blowing Brontosauri, before breaking the spell by reaching the end of *Bubble Bobble* and revealing their true identity of vertically-challenged munchkins. From here, they replaced their bubble-blowing skills with the ability to spew rainbows which doubled as platforms. Uh-huh. It all sounds strange but, quite frankly, name a platform game which does revolve around a sane scenario.

For Bub and Bob's conversion to the PlayStation, Acclaim have called upon Probe to do the honours and the result is a two-game CD featuring arcade-perfect recreations of *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands*. Oddly enough, for reasons known only to themselves, Acclaim have opted to give the third game in the series – the admittedly weak link of the trio – *Parasol Stars*, a miss.

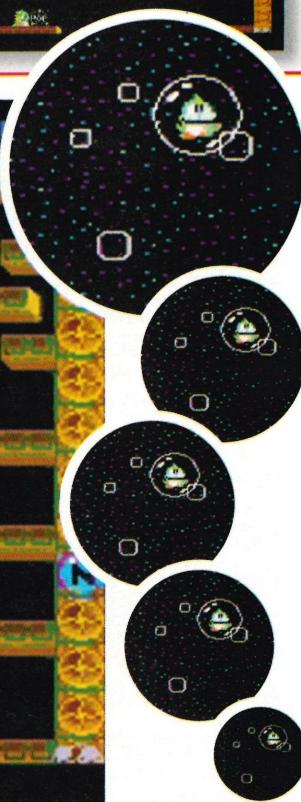


ENEMIES BY BARON VON BLUBBA,
BUBBLES BY BUB AND BOB, REPTILIAN
SKIN MODELS' OWN.

BUBBLE BOBBLE

BY LEAPING INTO A WALL, BUB AND BOB CAN BUBBLE THROUGH THEM.

Bear with us, as what follows is more than a little confusing. Bub and Bob were once cutesy whippersnappers who lived in a world where everyone was made up of four colours, and where the lands resembled a series of single-screen platform levels piled on top of each other. Still with us? As such, everything in the land was roseay (if precariously positioned), until a large hooded demon called Baron Von Blubba came along and kidnapped Bub and Bob's folks, and turned everyone in the land into evil creatures. Everyone apart from our heroes, of course, who instead found themselves trapped within reptilian skin and armed with the rather weedy power of blowing bubbles at will. Welcome to *Bubble Bobble*. One or two players are thus duly invited to steer the two bubbling Brontosauri through the game's one hundred levels in an attempt to free mater and pater from Von Blubba's lair – breaking the spell which has transformed everyone in the process. As the duo leap from ledge to ledge in the increasingly complex stages, the said converted inhabitants wander on screen and harangue the pair, proving fatal on contact. This is where the bubbling comes into play. Well, it would wouldn't it. Pressing the X button prompts our reptilian heroes to produce a bubble which encapsulates any meanies in its path. With the said enemy then trapped and floating around aimlessly, the pair then pop the bubbles with their spiny hides to break both the spell and the bubble, sending them spinning off screen. If left for too long, though, the creature eventually breaks free – moving twice as fast as before.

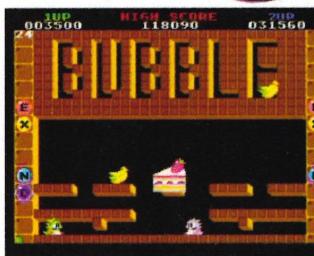




**AS THE GAME PROGRESSES,
THE ENEMY SPRITES BEGIN
TO FIGHT BACK.**

PAIR FOR THE COURSE

Both *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands* are littered with power-ups to make the pairs' life easier – with food playing a major part in both games. In the latter game, Bub and his brother collect extra rainbows so that the bridges they create are three spans across, while *Bubble Bobble* often replaces the bubbles with fireballs, and both games use running shoes to enable the nippy pair to run even faster. Indeed, several attributes are shared between the two games, with lightning bolts, water and fire trapped in bubbles which, when released, scorch across/release a deluge/ignite anything below, depending on which is used. Although the pair of games are filled to the gills with extras, *Bubble Bobble* really takes the pi... biscuit. It contains crooks (shepherds' ones, not villains) which release a huge piece of food when the level is complete, clocks to freeze enemies in their tracks, or an umbrella which advances the pair several stages. The most common element between the two games, though, revolves around the collection of bonus-giving pots of letters. Collecting bubbles marked with the letters in E-X-T-E-N-D or six coloured pots rewards the user with an extra life and instant transportation to the next level.



RAINBOW ISLANDS

Fresh from their adventure against Baron Von Blubba in the first game, the newly humanised Bub and Bob are once again pitted against the cowed villain as he uses a series of henchmen to overthrow the leaders of the pair's new home – the titular Rainbow Islands. Once again, the good citizens of their town have been mutated and turned against our lovable pair, so Bub and Bob are recalled to overthrow Blubba and his cronies, using their new-found rainbow-spewing skills to reach the top of the vertically-scrolling stages. As soon as the top of the stage is reached, the stage is cleared and the next unfolds. In all, there are eight themed worlds to free, with each made up of between four and nine sub-levels, and presided over by a larger boss creature. In much the same way as in *Bubble Bobble*, the rainbows are used to trap the loose critters, while jumping on the makeshift bridges makes them crumble, before collapsing and killing absolutely anything beneath. The code for *Rainbow Islands* is yet to enter Beta-testing, but a secondary preview will follow.

the 3-D action adventure



**FADE TO
BLACK**



It's official, Sony are looking to sell their games machine to a younger audience. At its new £200 price the hardware is said to be within the price range of a 14 year-old. So does this mean the PlayStation is about to lose its trendy image and become just another naff kid's toy? Adam Peters investigates...

Child's

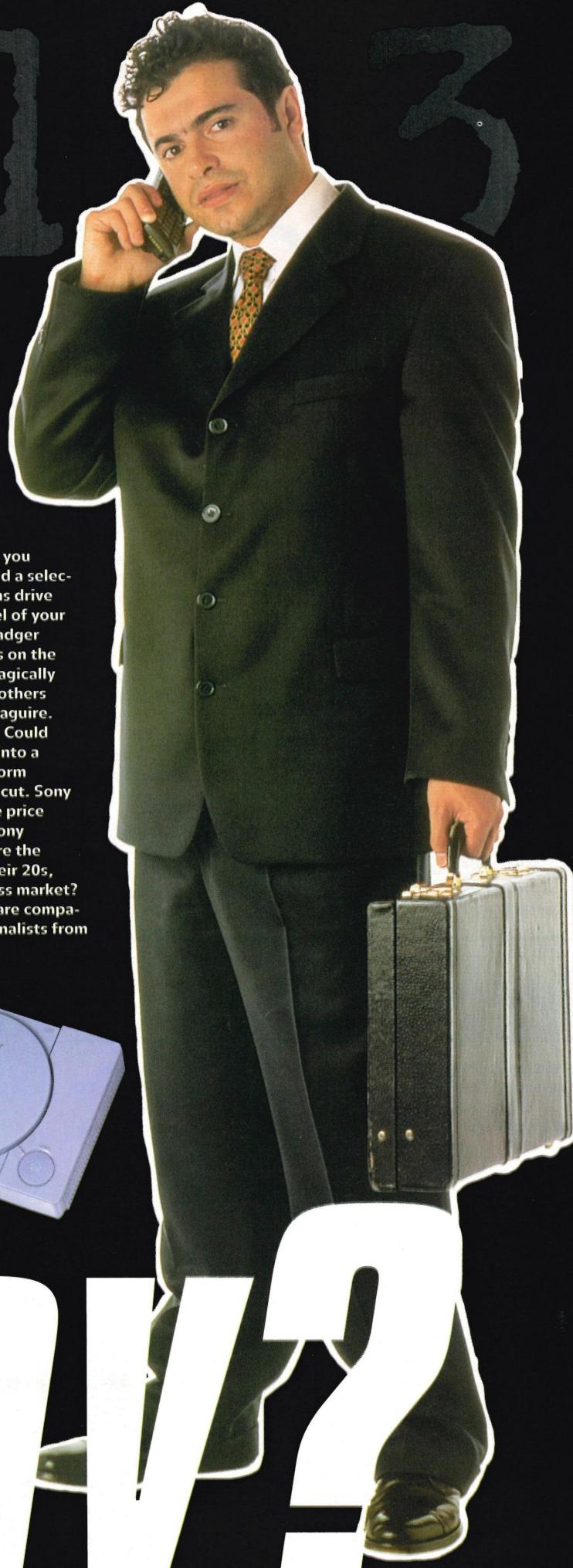
e=mc²

Imagine waking up tomorrow morning to discover that a picture of a cartoon character has suddenly appeared on the casing of your PlayStation. Nervously, you load up *Wipeout*. In place of the normal vehicles you find a selection of brightly-coloured buggies of the sort that clowns drive round circus rings in. Looking behind the steering wheel of your buggy, you see that your character is a bright orange badger called Bobo. A selection of cartoon mushrooms appears on the screen. The gameplay has gone from very difficult to tragically easy. Then the music starts up. It's not the Chemical Brothers track you're used to, but a recording by teen heartthrob Sean Maguire.

You pray that it's just a nightmare, but could it really happen? Could the PlayStation head the way of some previous games systems, into a cesspit of cartoon characters, movie licences and mindless platform games? It's always a possibility, especially with the recent price cut. Sony proudly announce that at £200 the PlayStation is now within the price range of a 14 year-old. It's the perfect Christmas present, and Sony would be fools if they didn't try to corner the kids' market before the Nintendo 64 shows up. So are the original owners, hip lads in their 20s, going to be left on the shelf as the PlayStation heads for the mass market?

We need reassuring so we ring Sony. We also call a few software companies, some retailers, the manager of Ministry of Sound, and journalists from *Smash Hits* and *Loaded*. For afters we take to the streets, scouting round five different locations in search of 'the spirit of PlayStation'. Is it dance music fanatics, arcade kids or pub goers that are buying the system? Where does the machine's future lie?

By the end of our travels we find reassurance. The kids will not take over. Beer-sozzled, club-going, mid-20s sophisticates have nothing to worry about. But hey, don't take our word for it, read on...



Play?

The New Age of PlayStation...

Children are scary little things. Many of them don't think logically in the same way that the rest of us do. They will buy anything if it's got a photo of Pamela Anderson or those two from *The X Files* on it. In the world of video games this has led in the past to some very

"Our key audience is 16-24 year olds. Now we want to pick up the people in their teens."



WILL THE PRICE DROP FOR THE PLAYSTATION ATTRACT YOUNGER GAME PLAYERS?

bad games that sold by the bucketload. Back in the Dark Ages of Gaming, every software house knew that if they wanted to shift a game, instead of spending the money on development they could just buy a licence and produce a game 'based' on a current blockbuster movie. The theory was that the younger gamer would buy the game if they liked the film, even though the two were only loosely connected. So it

came to pass that a million turgid games with Arnold Schwarzenegger's photo on the front topped the games charts at the start of the decade.

Kids are a bit more sophisticated and sussed now, but a PlayStation market dominated by younger players will certainly be very different from the one we have now. It comes as some relief then to learn that there isn't a tidal wave of adolescents descending on the games stores. In actual fact, the age of the people buying Sony machines has gone up since the price was cut to £200. Alan Wellsman, Head of PR at Sony's UK office, has the figures: "We saw 30,000 extra sales immediately after the price drop, with the customers being either the same age or older than existing owners. Our key audience is 16-24 year olds. We're already selling to people in their 20s, now we want to pick up the people in their teens. The younger audience will probably arrive in Christmas or after the New Year with gift-buying and granny money.

"Current owners have nothing



to fear.

No-one will forget our initial audience, 200,000 people

in their mid-20s. There are some games coming out that are aimed at younger players, but also a lot that the older audience would be interested in. The PlayStation is a different proposition to the Sega Megadrive. The Sega machine had a following amongst older people in the UK, but the audience was much younger in the rest of the world, hence the emphasis on cartoony platform games. The PlayStation, on the other hand, sells to an older market throughout the world."

The price cut seemed to take everyone by surprise. "It was always planned. It's one of those

Techno Heads

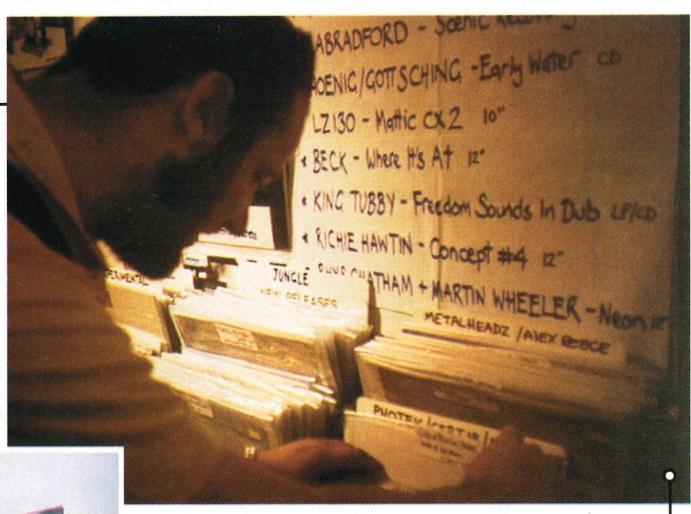
LOCATION: Rough Trade Records, Neal's Yard, Covent Garden.

DESCRIPTION: Cramped subterranean record store. Loads of vinyl, CD albums and fanzines. Flyers used in place of wallpaper.

CLIENTELE: Fans of obscure indie bands, techno trainspotters, skate punks, DJs, pop stars and wannabes.

Our search for the archetypal PlayStation owner begins here in the heart of London's trendy Covent Garden. Sony reckon the typical owner is either a clubber or a big fan of indie music. The Rough Trade record shop is a popular destination for both groups of people, with its shelves full of hard-to-find vinyl imports. As the store is located in the basement of a skatewear shop, Slam City Skates, there are groups of skate kids in back-to-front baseball caps hanging around too. We decide to focus on the techno music fans. Our mission is simple: hang around by the techno/jungle racks and ask ten random customers whether they own a PlayStation. If they do, quiz them about it. If they don't, ask them why not.

It's Sod's Law that the first person we ask, 23 year-old Tony, turns out to be a Saturn owner. "The graphics are better on the PlayStation," he admits, "but I prefer the playability of the Sega machine. I like arcade conversions, things like *Virtua Fighter*." Would Tony be prepared, in time honoured washing powder advert fashion, to trade his current system for a sparkly Sony machine? "The one complaint I have with Sega is that it's taken a long time for the games to come out. Sony



TONY, WHO PREFERENCES COOL SOUNDS TO COOL GAMES.



seem to have got the games out there a lot quicker." Has the price cut tempted him? "I think all the manufacturers are cutting their prices because of the Nintendo 64." Is video game music the new techno? "Game music has always been electronic, but it's not like I'd ever go out and buy a game soundtrack album. I always turn the music off."

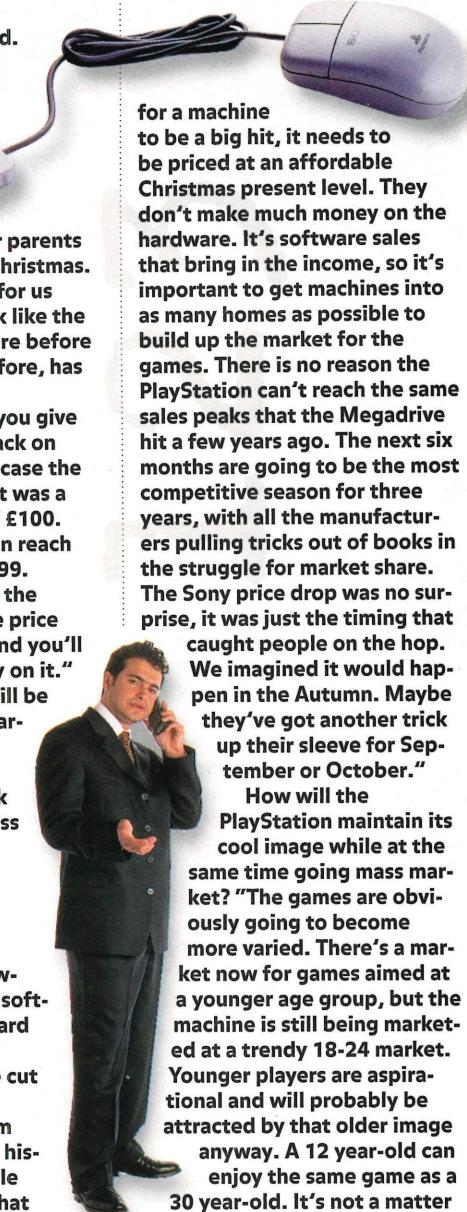
The shop is starting to fill up. For some reason we decide that the likeliest PlayStation owners are the peo-

things we had to keep secret until it happened. The timing was important to us. Everyone knows the machine is £199, so kids have got six months in which to start pestering their parents to get it for them for Christmas. It's worked quite well for us because it doesn't look like the Nintendo 64 will be here before Christmas. That, therefore, has given us a window."

What advice would you give to someone holding back on buying the machine in case the price drops further? "It was a significant price cut of £100. We're confident we can reach our sales targets at £199. 30,000 people bought the machine as soon as the price dropped. Buy it now and you'll have more time to play on it." Will the PlayStation still be a cool item for a 25 year-old when the stores start filling with 13 year-olds? "Yeah. Look at Oasis, they have mass market appeal but they're not shite."

The Games People Play

Well that's Sony's viewpoint, what about the software companies? Richard Eddy of Codemasters believes that the price cut was necessary for the PlayStation's long term future. "It's repeating history," he says. "Console manufacturers know that



for a machine to be a big hit, it needs to be priced at an affordable Christmas present level. They don't make much money on the hardware. It's software sales that bring in the income, so it's important to get machines into as many homes as possible to build up the market for the games. There is no reason the PlayStation can't reach the same sales peaks that the Megadrive hit a few years ago. The next six months are going to be the most competitive season for three years, with all the manufacturers pulling tricks out of books in the struggle for market share. The Sony price drop was no surprise, it was just the timing that caught people on the hop. We imagined it would happen in the Autumn. Maybe they've got another trick up their sleeve for September or October."

How will the PlayStation maintain its cool image while at the same time going mass market? "The games are obviously going to become more varied. There's a market now for games aimed at a younger age group, but the machine is still being marketed at a trendy 18-24 market. Younger players are aspirational and will probably be attracted by that older image anyway. A 12 year-old can enjoy the same game as a 30 year-old. It's not a matter

of bolts through their chins and rings through everything but their eyeballs. Perhaps surprisingly, the pierced people all hate video games with a vengeance. We see a bloke with cartoon characters all over his bag and jacket. Surely he must own a PlayStation? And yes he does! Steve is 27 and works in a record shop (not the one we're in). He bought his machine six weeks ago. "I'd wanted one for a while," he says, "and when the price dropped to £200 I had to get it. I'm not worried about younger people getting into PlayStations. If we got to a point where every game coming out was a crap movie licence, older players would quickly lose interest, but Sony have initially targeted the machine at older people and I think the games will always reflect that."

The final word goes to some bloke in an orange jumper: "No, I don't own a PlayStation. All I own is two Technics." He's probably answering for a lot of those who just replied with cursive grunts. It seems clear that the most committed techno fans, many of whom are amateur or professional DJs, will always have obscure 12" dance records to spend their money on. The PlayStation, in the circumstances, will be struggling to win them over.

PERCENTAGE OWNING PLAYSTATIONS:
10% (with an equal number of Sega Satellites).

ODDS ON MARKET DOMINATION:

8-1. The sticker 'Music by DJ Head Driller' is unlikely to sell a game to the average Joe.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED:

People with steel bolts through their body parts are statistically less likely to own a PlayStation.

Role-Players

LOCATION: Orc's Nest, Earlham Street, Covent Garden.

DESCRIPTION: A temple to the Dungeons & Dragons sect. Medieval shields on the walls, role-playing games and accessories on the shelves.

CLIENTELE: Bearded bikers in leather jackets and geeky guys in glasses.

Admit it, you've always found them a bit scary. Those people who stay up all night in a room full of blokes, smoking funny cigarettes, ordering pizza and saying things like "roll stamina at two die six plus the modifier to dodge the dragon's claw". They don't wash, they listen to bands like Slayer and Iron Maiden and they've never had a girlfriend.

They probably still live with their parents. Savage stereotyping, but role-playing has always been shunned by much of society, seen as a symbol of social inadequacy to match trainspotting or watching *Telly Addicts*. In the days before video games, however, RPGs were all the entertainment there was for people too old for Snakes and Ladders and too young for sex.

Today's role-player is in his 20s. With the appearance of collectible card games like *Magic: The Gathering*, the genre is becoming frighteningly mainstream. So does your average role-player own a PlayStation? It looked like it was going to be a landslide yes when the first person we asked said "sort of". Unfortunately, it turns out his machine was stolen three weeks ago and he doesn't want to talk about it. No-one else we asked had a machine or any intention of buying one. We wanted to know why, so we pressed for an explanation.

John Smith (his real name) is 25 and works as a computer programmer: "Because I work with computers, the last thing I want to do when I get home is to sit in front of a screen. I used to own a Commodore 64 and Amiga, but I don't feel video games can match the social aspect of playing an RPG. I have played a few computer RPGs, they tend to be very unsophisticated dungeon romps similar to a *Dungeons & Dragons* game from about 1980. I know that Japanese RPGs are different in style, but there's very few video games I'd pay more than £20 for. I suppose I might buy a PlayStation if I had money to burn, but I think that the cost of the software is far too high."

Daniel, a 19 year-old student, owns a Nintendo: "I have thought about buying a PlayStation, but I think I'll wait for the Nintendo 64. I know people with PlayStations, so I get to play on the system. I've played some computer RPGs, but I'd love there to be better ones. In Japan they're the most popular type of game, but the Japanese games don't get released over here, probably because it's so much hassle translating all the text."

Lewis, 27, is working behind the counter. He rented a PlayStation from Blockbuster once: "I was ill and it killed three days of staying in. The problem with renting from Blockbuster is you didn't get the memory card. I rented *Kileak the Blood* and I had to start from the beginning each time I played it. If I was earning upwards of £13,000 a year, I wouldn't think twice about buying a Sony. As I'm an impoverished student I just can't afford it."

It seems that the price of the machine is the main concern for role-players, though some appear to be of a more religious persuasion. "I've got better things to do with my money," says the bloke in leather looking at the box set of orc miniatures. "I don't own one and I'm not likely to," says the father with his son. "Not unless we win the lottery," says the son. I hold the door open for them as they walk off into the sunset with their huge bags full of metal models.

PERCENTAGE OWNING PLAYSTATIONS:
None. It would have been 10%, but for a burglary.

ODDS ON MARKET DOMINATION:

40-1. The odds will shorten when Japanese PlayStation adventures start getting released over here.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED:

£40 is too much to pay for a video game. For a few lumps of goblin-shaped metal, on the other hand, it's a bargain.



LEWIS RENTED FROM BLOCKBUSTER BUT WAS DISMAYED NOT TO GET A MEMORY CARD.



RAYMAN - AIMED AT KIDS?



RESIDENT EVIL - AIMED OLDER?



BUT IS THIS A CONSCIOUS DECISION...



RELATING TO PRICING?

of age but attitude."

James Leach of developers Bullfrog thinks that the older gamers will always dominate the market, even if they become outnumbered. "The markets are influenced by the people who want to see the best game," he maintains. "The older consumers have more money and can influence things accordingly. Bullfrog certainly won't be writing any cartoony platform games for the PlayStation nor will we be getting someone like Boyzone in to do the music. Not in this lifetime."

Steven Hay of Ocean Software doesn't think that machines selling to teenagers is anything new. "To a certain extent it's been happening all along," he insists. "Toys 'R' Us have always sold an awful lot of PlayStations, mainly family purchases for 13-15 year-olds. The price cut will encourage more of these purchases. I don't think older people will be pissed off. There are games aimed at younger people, *Rayman* for instance, but there's also lots of great



Sale of the Century

Two months ago *PlayStation Plus* ran a feature about the price of games. The hardware price cut occurred between that issue going to press and appearing on the shelves. How different would the situation on the shop floors have been had we conducted our research after the price drop? The only way to find out would be to ask the five retailers we spoke to in the original article.

"I don't think Sony are going to let things slip. Magazines like Arena have games columns again."

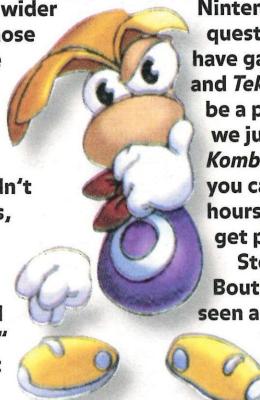
So we did.

First up is Stacy at Birmingham's HMV store: "Hardware sales picked up a little bit, but not dramatically. I

think that's due to the time of year. Things have been better since we started doing an

offer of a machine with *Alien Trilogy* for £219. I expect we'll see the big sales at Christmas or maybe if some kids get bought a machine as a treat for doing well in their exams. The machine is going to sell to a far wider age range, hitting those 13-14 year-olds. I've got a feeling Sony will knock another £50 off the price before Christmas. Older gamers shouldn't worry about the kids, though. With titles like *Formula 1*, *Resident Evil* and *Tekken 2*, the games are still very adult oriented."

Over to Damien at HMV Brighton:



"We're selling a lot more machines now, and that's led to an increase in sales of the games too. The people buying the machine are still in the usual age range, although I'm surprised at how many grown-ups, people in their 40s, have started buying PlayStations. At £199 it's going to be the best-selling machine at Christmas, though I do think some people are waiting for the

Nintendo 64. As for the age question, as long as we still have games like *Alien Trilogy* and *Tekken*, it's not going to be a problem. However, if we just end up with *Mortal Kombat* and blast-em-ups you can complete in three hours, older people might get pissed off."

Steve at Electronics Boutique in Bristol has seen a lot of action: "When the Saturn's price was cut, its sales started to pick up. When

Games Fanatics

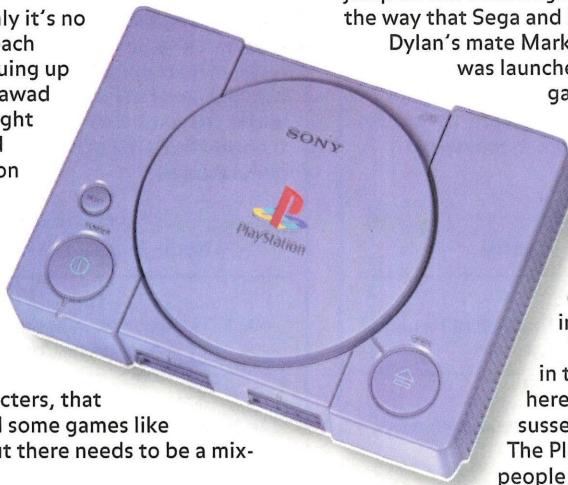
LOCATION: Computer Exchange, Rathbone Place, off Oxford Street.

DESCRIPTION: Britain's biggest second-hand video games store. Loud

music, industrial shop design, lots of games.

CLIENTELE: People selling off unwanted birthday presents from Uncle Arthur. Lots of people in baseball caps ogling screens showing the latest import titles.

Perhaps we're cheating a bit. Certainly it's no surprise that all the people we approach here own PlayStations. They are queuing up to buy PlayStation games, after all. Jawad is 18 and "a sort of student". He bought his machine only two weeks ago. "I'd been playing on my mate's PlayStation every week since he bought it," he confesses, "and when the price dropped I decided to get my own machine." Does he worry about Sony targeting younger gamers? "As long as they keep bringing out games for older people, it will be OK. If it ends up like the Nintendo where everything's full of cute characters, that will be a different matter. We've had some games like that already, *Rayman* for instance, but there needs to be a mixture of game styles."



Dylan, 18, works at Wembley Stadium: "I bought a PlayStation the day it was released. I think that 13 year-olds are more likely to go for the Saturn because of Sega's reputation. The PlayStation has always been aimed at older people, but maybe Sony are now trying to win over the younger people who bought Satellites. I don't expect any adult to buy their child a Nintendo 64 when the games are £70 plus. The PlayStation is only just beginning, it will take over the market. Sony are not going to jump on the bandwagon and release a brand new machine every year the way that Sega and Nintendo seem to."

Dylan's mate Mark, 19, originally went for the Saturn when it was launched. "I made a mistake," he admits. "No good games were coming out for it, so I sold it just after Christmas and bought a PlayStation. I think it will be a good thing if younger people do start getting PlayStations. Kids can't afford to pay £50 for a game, so maybe that will force them to lower the price of the software. The PlayStation is always going to be trendy because it's produced by Sony who have a reputation for making trendy products."

The Computer Exchange is the shop for gamers in the know and the popularity of the PlayStation here is testament to the fact that people who are sussed on home game systems recognise its quality. The PlayStation and PC shelves are the only ones people here are showing any interest in.



**"MORE KIDS," SAYS ONE RETAILER...****"NO CHANGE," ARGUES ANOTHER.****THIS IS A DEBATE DESTINED TO RUN...****...AND RUN...**

the PlayStation's went down, it was as if they re-launched the machine. A lot of families have started buying PlayStations, trading in their old systems to get the machine for £100. The £200 price tag means the machine is no longer seen as a luxury item - £200 is a quite affordable price. The market won't change, it will just open up more."

Now the scores from our Cardiff jury, Game manager Daniel Allen: "The age range has come down a bit. We do see 10-15 year olds getting their parents to buy the machine for them. As the market gets younger we will see more platform games. On the other hand, Nintendo might well corner that market with *Mario 64*. Then again, look at PC machines. The games are aimed at the 20+ age group, but that doesn't stop kids buying the machines, telling their parents it's for their homework. If kids get into PlayStation it will just

widen the machine's appeal." Manchester's Game store is temporarily closed (due to the IRA bombing), but we tracked manager Phil Gardin down to the company's Hanley branch. "The machine is selling to a mixture of young and old now," he says. "Reading between the lines, you have to assume that's why Sony cut the price, to get more penetration in the younger age range. I don't think older people should worry about it, the quality of games hasn't deteriorated and they are still aimed at 21-25 year-olds. What we did see in the Manchester store was a lot of camaraderie, with the 23 year-olds talking to the 14 year-olds about games, giving each other advice.

People were swapping memory cards. There's very little conflict between the generations."

Cool and Groovy

One of the most visible symbols of just how 'cool' the PlayStation is perceived to be is the



PERCENTAGE OWNING PLAYSTATIONS:

100% (but we were standing by the PlayStation shelves).

ODDS ON MARKET DOMINATION:

2-5 on. The people who have grown up with other games systems continue to form the majority of current owners.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED:

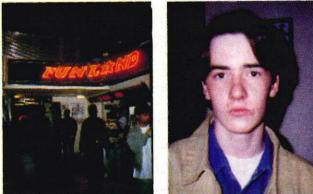
People queuing up to buy PlayStation games probably own a PlayStation.

Arcade Nuts

LOCATION: Funland, Trocadero Centre, Piccadilly.

DESCRIPTION: Hell on Earth?

CLIENTELE: Tourists, juvenile street gangs, people with no ear-drums.



Funland is London's biggest amusement arcade, but only for another couple of months. Sega World, four floors of games machines, is on the way. The new arcade, incidentally, will be in the same building. Yes missus, the Trocadero is the teenage entertainment capital of Central London. It's a weird place. The amusement arcade has acquired some infamy over the years, allegedly for being a preferred hang-out of rent boys and drug dealers. However deserved or undeserved the reputation, there certainly seem to be more security guards than customers here. A couple of young miscreants were being frog-marched off as we arrived.

There is an air of menace to the place. On more than one occasion in the past I've been accosted here by adolescents at the change machine and told, "give me a pound, I've got a knife." Fortunately, the reply "give me a fiver, I've got a whole cutlery set" is usually enough to confuse them. Our biggest problem today though is the noise. Relentless techno pumps out throughout the arcade, the volume level set somewhere between 'raise the dead' and 'alter the geological structure of the Northern European tectonic plate'. It's totally impossible to speak to anyone inside, so we hang around by the exit and catch people as they leave. Surprisingly, none of our ten victims owns a PlayStation.

"He's got a PlayStation," we are told by one teenager, only to learn that the informant can't tell the difference between a PlayStation and a Super Nintendo. Shan, 22, is the closest we come. "My brother's got a PlayStation," he says. "He's a year older than me and he's had it for seven or eight months. I'm not interested in home systems, I prefer playing in arcades. I like racing games and they aren't any good on a television. You need the steering wheel and stuff."

The view that home systems are no substitute for an arcade is echoed by other people. Gary, 15, prefers the social aspect of arcades: "Why sit at home and play games? I prefer to come down here with my mates and meet girls." 16 year-old Cameron is a voice apart from all of this. "I don't really play arcade machines much," he says. "I've had a Super Nintendo for four years. The price of the PlayStation doesn't put me off, I'm just happy with the machine I've got. I might upgrade to a Nintendo 64 when it comes out, but I'm not sure."

It's the reverse side of the coin. While the Sony PlayStation has become the first games system marketed towards clubbers, it's also become the first to attain its success without really enticing the hardcore arcade gamer in the way that other systems have.

PERCENTAGE OWNING PLAYSTATIONS:

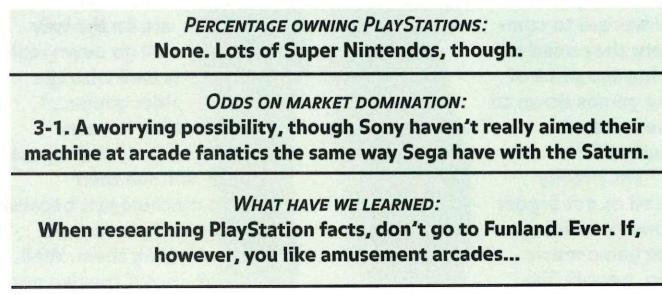
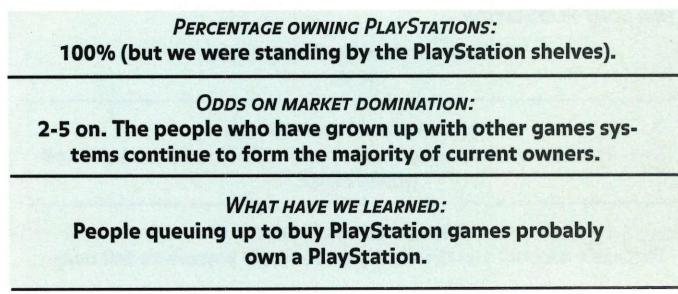
None. Lots of Super Nintendos, though.

ODDS ON MARKET DOMINATION:

3-1. A worrying possibility, though Sony haven't really aimed their machine at arcade fanatics the same way Sega have with the Saturn.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED:

When researching PlayStation facts, don't go to Funland. Ever. If, however, you like amusement arcades...

**LEFT: JAWAD, HAPPY TO BUY HIS PLAYSTATION GAMES FROM THE COMPUTER EXCHANGE.**



THE PLAYSTATION WAS ORIGINALLY AIMED AT THE SORT OF CLUBBERS FOUND IN SITU AT MINISTRY OF SOUND.

room full of machines at London's famous Ministry of Sound night-club. We wonder whether Ministry boss Mark Rodell is worried about what to do with the room if the machine suddenly becomes naff? "I don't think that's going to happen," he says. "It's like saying your CD player is naff because everyone's got one. The software is the important thing. As long as the games that come out are fresh, aimed at cool clubbers, we'll keep supporting the machine. It's ridiculous to say that something will lose its appeal because more people are buying it."

We've heard from representatives of the 20s clubber set, now let's have a word on behalf of the teenagers. Ben Knowles is the Reviews Editor of *Smash Hits*, the teeny pop bible. He used to own a Megadrive but won't buy a PlayStation because he's too busy to play on it. "Games have a much lower profile these days," he says, "two years ago games were selling ten times what records were. The launch of *Sonic 2* received more press and television coverage than an Oasis album. People in the music industry were really worried that kids were spending their money on games rather than music. Over the last 18 months music has taken over again. I think parents are a lot happier buying their child a £200 hi-fi rather than a £200 games system. If games are to compete they need to bring the price of the games down to the price of a music CD."

"They really need to get bigger bands providing the game music too, people like Blur and Ash."



They need to reconstruct the market from older people to younger gamers. I think video games have had their peak. Four years ago *Sonic the Hedgehog* was more recognisable than any member of any band. Today Noel Gallagher, Damon Albarn and Gaz from Supergrass are more recognisable than any games character. That's a problem the games industry has to address."

We'll leave the last word to a publication many of our vox pop interviewees believe has played an important part in the PlayStation's success at cornering the mid-20s market. The Sony machine is thriving due to the new culture of laddism, apparently. *Loaded* magazine is mentioned and it's certainly true that *Loaded* is virtually the only lifestyle magazine that gives over a whole page each month to video games reviews. Piers Townley is the magazine's resident PlayStation expert. He believes that the quality of

games will sustain the machine: "We will see a lot more platform games coming to the fore, but there will be other stuff too. Some of the games that are on the way will go down really well with the older gamers. I think it's very unlikely that people will sell their machine just because kids have started buying them. Well, not if they've got any sense."



People in Pubs

LOCATION: The Good Mixer, Inverness Street, Camden Town.

DESCRIPTION: An ugly pub full of beautiful people. Probably the most famous drinking establishment in the world.

CLIENTELE: Media mafioso, students, squatters, *NME* readers and a pop star's girlfriend.

The world's most famous pub? Quite possibly. The Mixer has acquired a legendary reputation within the pages of the music press, basically because the guitarist from Blur drank here once. The pop stars have long since moved on to less conspicuous hosteries, and said guitarist's girlfriend is probably the most famous person here tonight. Ignore all the Britpop crap, the Mixer is actually a brilliant pub because the beer's cheap (for Camden), the punters young and friendly, and the bar serves till midnight six days a week. We're not here to enjoy ourselves, though. Well, we are, but

we have to put ten random drinkers on the spot first. The PlayStation issue stirs up some strong, perhaps alcohol-enhanced, opinions.

"I've never owned a video games system," says Bill, 32. "I don't like them. They cost too much. I prefer watching the television, going out drinking, taking walks in the park and reading dirty magazines." If the price of the machine was cut further, would he be tempted? "I'd buy one if the price went down to £12. Or I might go halves with someone on it."

Fabian, 23, takes an even more extreme view: "Video games are just expensive masturbation. I prefer cheap masturbation, American magazines like *D-Cup*. I'm a Luddite, I don't believe in technology. I have to take the train because my bike got kicked in, but it galls me. I don't own a television, I read William Faulkner and F Scott Fitzgerald. The video games generation are f***ing crustaceans. Only a pretty girl could change my opinion on this, and pretty girls don't play video games."

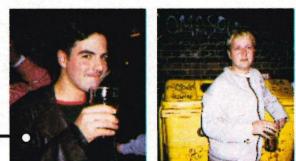
Fortunately, we do find one person with a PlayStation. Lawrence is 21. "I bought my machine about three months ago," he says, "paying £250 for it at the Music & Video Exchange shop. I buy my games from there as well, second hand prices are much more reasonable than buying the titles new." Is he worried about the PlayStation becoming a kids' market? "The way I look at, I've already got my machine, I don't care who else buys one. I've been totally impressed with the quality of the games, though if the quality dropped I might think again."

Our final two interviewees, Nick and Archie, are both 28. They talk simultaneously for almost an hour at various tangents. If they were in the Olympics, they'd be on a plane home by now. They buy us beer though, something we'd like to encourage all vox pop interviewees to do in future.

"It's the price of the games that puts me off buying a machine," says Nick. "Sega Rally is the only game that's really caught my eye, so I suppose I'd buy a Saturn if I was going to get anything." It's the music that concerns Archie: "They should start using indie music in games. Look at television sports programmes like *Match of the Day*, they use indie bands in their round-ups and goal of the month competitions, why do video games still have terrible Japanese electronic versions of Bon Jovi music as their soundtracks?"

People in pubs, then. Are they the future of PlayStation? Does beer and electronic games equipment go together? (Remember to unplug the machine from the mains before trying to find out.) Will we see machines in pubs like we have in clubs? Or does the future of Sony's machine belong to the generation that needs fake ID to get served in here? The truth, as an obscure television show keeps reminding us, is out there.

BILL PREFERENCES A PORN MAG AND A PINT TO A SONY PLAYSTATION.



PERCENTAGE OWNING PLAYSTATIONS:
10%.

ODDS ON MARKET DOMINATION:
5-1. The blokes here would rather spend their cash on beer and porno mags.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED:
The more alcohol you drink, the more likely you are to fall over.

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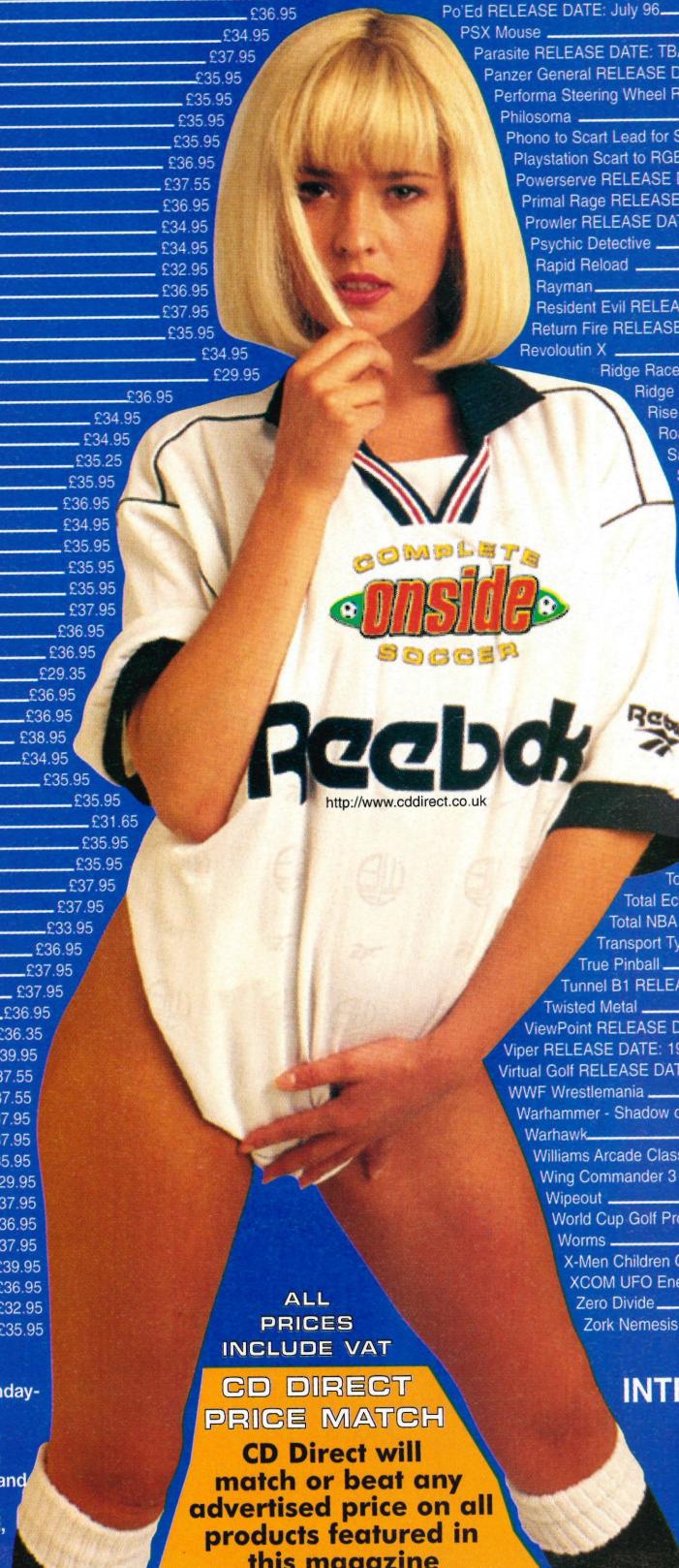
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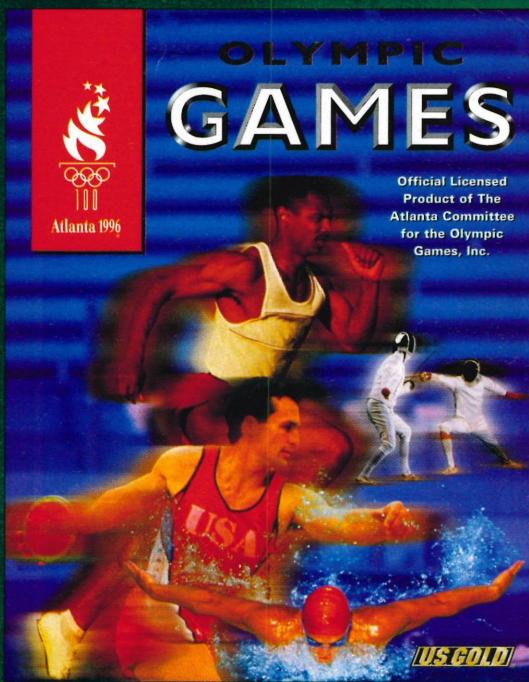
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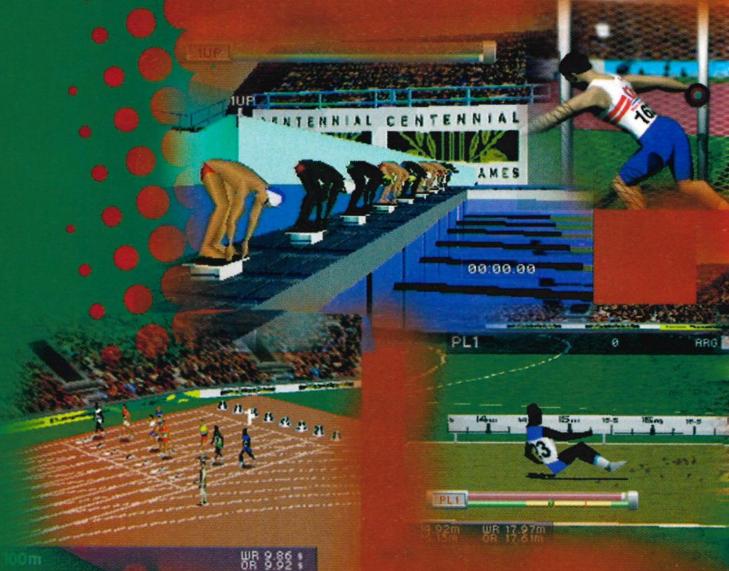
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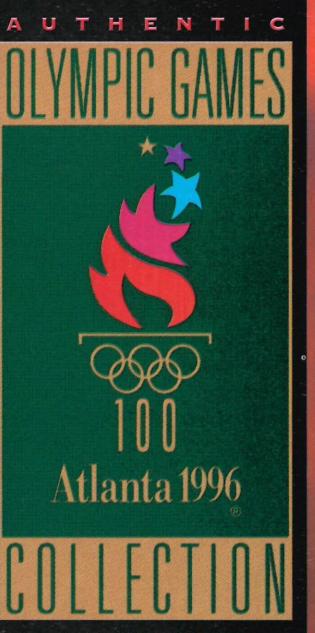
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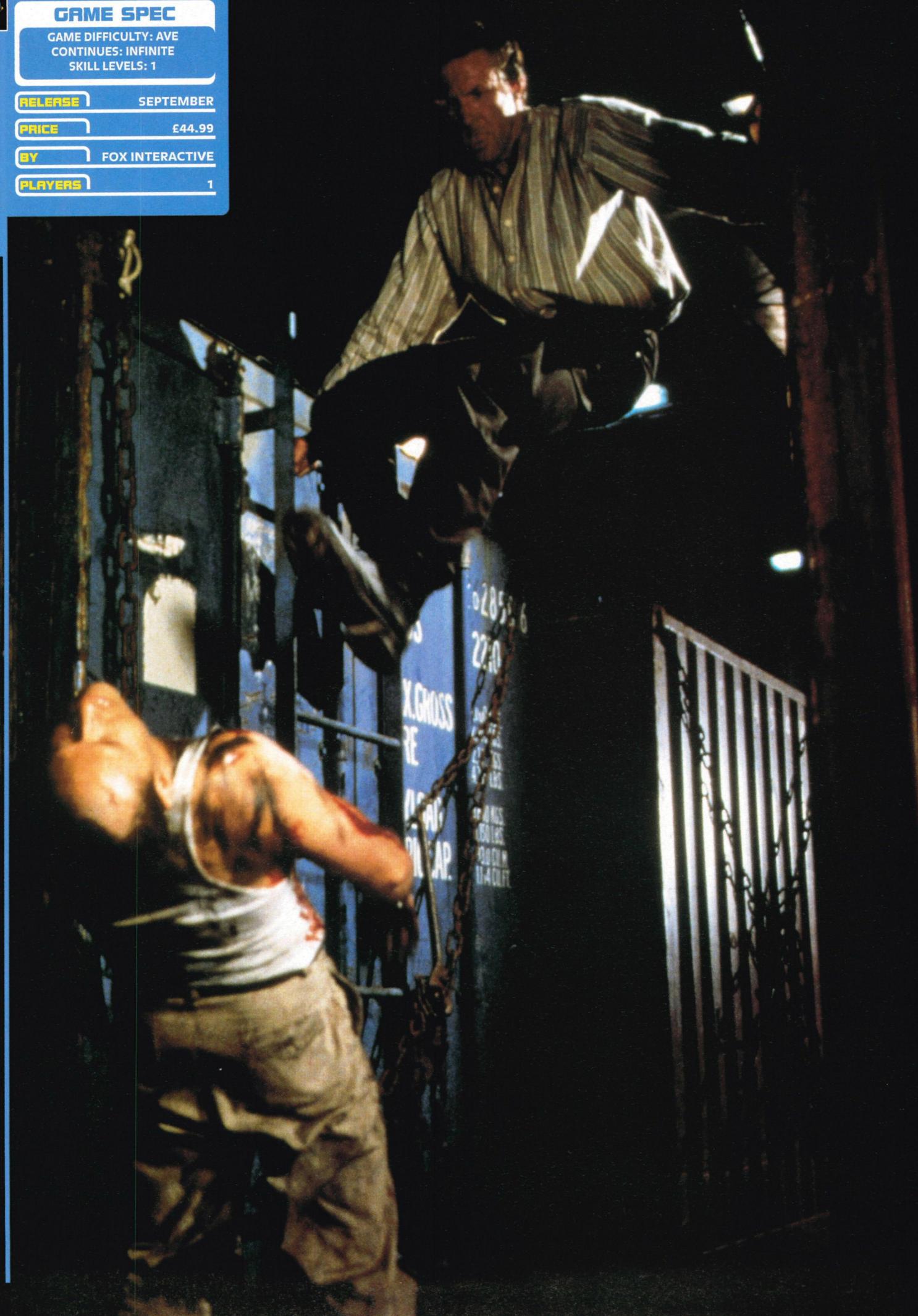


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GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVE
CONTINUES: INFINITE
SKILL LEVELS: 1

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| RELEASE | SEPTEMBER |
| PRICE | £44.99 |
| BY | FOX INTERACTIVE |
| PLAYERS | 1 |



Die Hard Trilogy

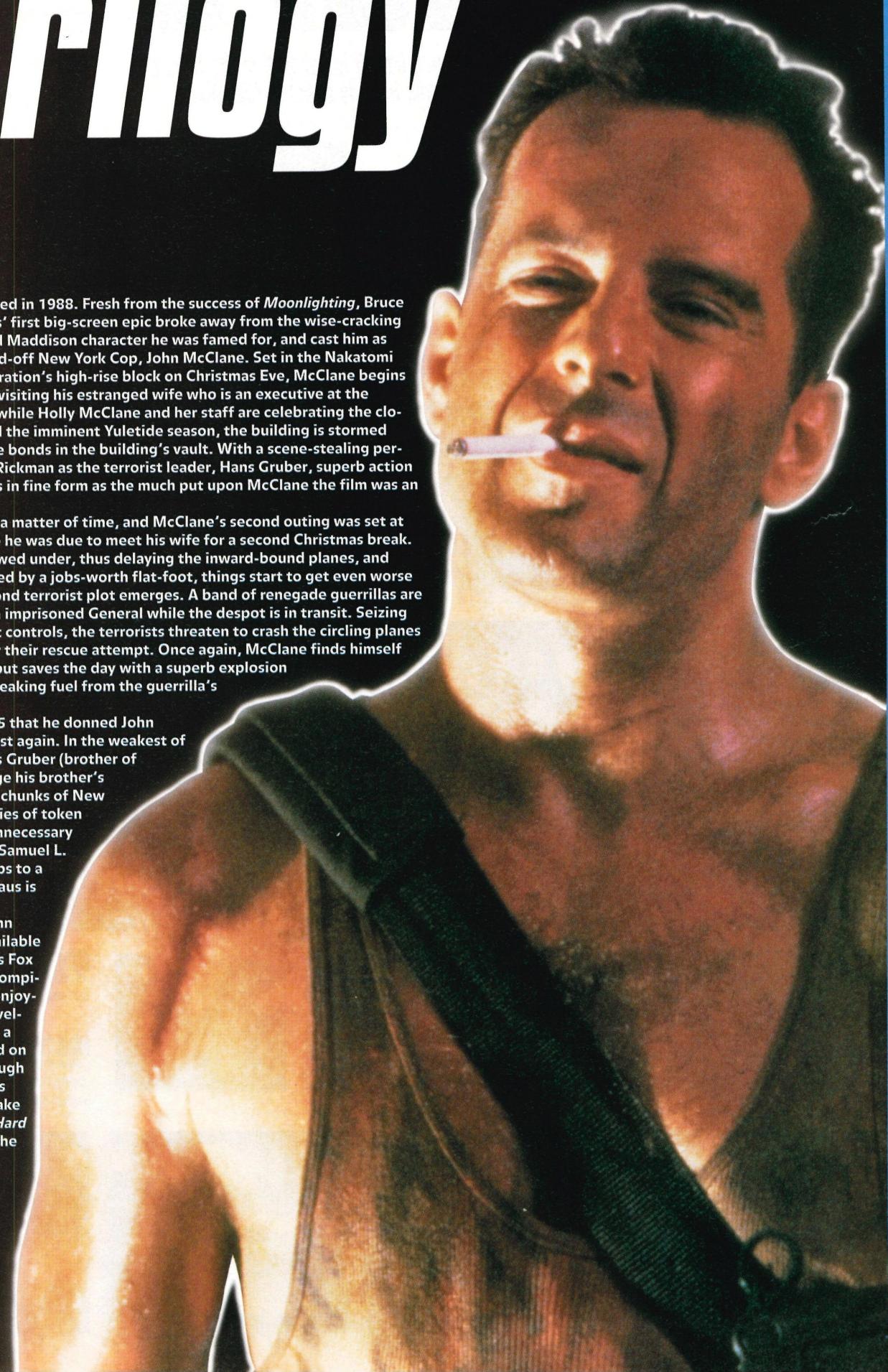


It started in 1988. Fresh from the success of *Moonlighting*, Bruce Willis' first big-screen epic broke away from the wise-cracking David Maddison character he was famed for, and cast him as pissed-off New York Cop, John McClane. Set in the Nakatomi Corporation's high-rise block on Christmas Eve, McClane begins the film visiting his estranged wife who is an executive at the company. However, while Holly McClane and her staff are celebrating the closure of a big deal and the imminent Yuletide season, the building is stormed by terrorists after the bonds in the building's vault. With a scene-stealing performance from Alan Rickman as the terrorist leader, Hans Gruber, superb action set-pieces, and Willis in fine form as the much put upon McClane the film was an instant success.

Sequels were only a matter of time, and McClane's second outing was set at Dulles airport, where he was due to meet his wife for a second Christmas break. With the airport snowed under, thus delaying the inward-bound planes, and McClane's car clamped by a jobs-worth flat-foot, things start to get even worse for our hero as a second terrorist plot emerges. A band of renegade guerrillas are planning to spring an imprisoned General while the despot is in transit. Seizing control of the airport controls, the terrorists threaten to crash the circling planes one at a time to clear their rescue attempt. Once again, McClane finds himself against all the odds but saves the day with a superb explosion by igniting a trail of leaking fuel from the guerrilla's escaping jet.

It wasn't until 1995 that he donned John McClane's grubby vest again. In the weakest of the three films, Klaus Gruber (brother of Hans), plans to avenge his brother's death by blowing up chunks of New York. Following a series of token set-pieces and the unnecessary pairing of Willis and Samuel L. Jackson, the film limps to a dull ending where Klaus is tamely killed off.

Now, however, John McClane's vest is available in PlayStation grey as Fox Interactive unveil a compilation based on the enjoyable trilogy, with developers Probe offering a different game based on each film — with enough gratuitous explosions and shoot-outs to make it worthy of the *Die Hard* name. 'Welcome to the party, pal...' Indeed.



Die Hard

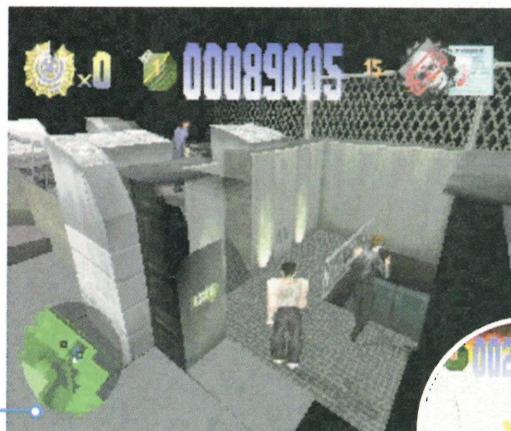
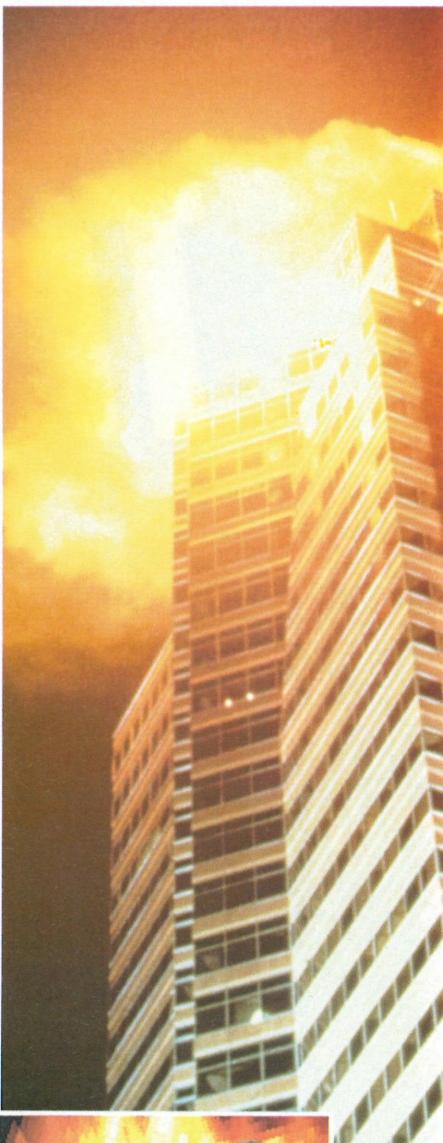
It's Christmas. The holiday season is about to begin, but all is not well in the Nakatomi Plaza. As the party begins to warm up, a daring heist is about to take place.

YIPPEE KAY-AYE

The first film is represented by a polygon-based *Loaded* variant, with the player guiding a McClane sprite (with a surprising amount of hair), through a Nakatomi building viewed from a raised point behind the sprite. True to the film, Hans Gruber is holding the company employees (including McClane's wife, Holly) hostage on the executive floor. But realising that a game where the player picked off a dozen terrorists would be less than enthralling, the developers at Probe have expanded Gruber's team to the size of a small infantry, with dozens of gun-toting terrorists now patrolling each of the building's twenty floors. The building itself has been recreated using on-set stills taken during the making of the movie, thus incorporating familiar sights such as Mr Takagi's model of a forthcoming building project, and the computer room where McClane's feet are cut to shreds by broken glass. McClane begins the game with a fifteen-round pistol, but exploring the corridors reveals crates containing grenades, machine guns and even gas bombs, all of which prove useful in his one-man mission.



WAS IT REALLY 1988 THAT BRUCE BECAME McCLANE? BLIMEY.



A HOSTAGE REACHES THE EXIT.



THE EXPLOSIONS THROUGHOUT THE THREE GAMES ARE NOTHING SHORT OF SPECTACULAR.



THE NAKATOMI BUILDING IS CHOCK FULL OF CORRIDORS FOR McCLANE TO HIDE HIMSELF IN.





UP ON THE ROOF

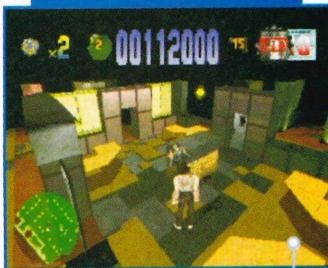
Just as *Die Hard* lit the silver screen with roof top explosions, an armoured car blown into tinfoil with a rocket launcher, and a ball of fire blowing out windows and spreading through the lift shaft, so the game offers virtually unlimited opportunities for destruction. Starting in the parking lot, rows of cars are trashed via casually-tossed grenades, while windows are blown into fragments, and computers and office furniture laid to waste as the automatic weapons blow them into their component parts. Similarly, walls can be blown open to reveal hidden objects or obstacles cleared with a well-timed grenade. As the carnage continues, the McClane sprite is always fully visible thanks to an ingenious 'vanishing wall' routine which scales the walls down in size as if shadows were encroaching — and this also helps showcase the motion-capture techniques used on the McClane sprite and his plentiful opposition.

AH, MR COWBOY I PRESUME...

The game's recreation of the Nakatomi building is considerably shorter than the movie's forty-storey setting — and that's taking into account the unfinished status of the silver screen version! Each level has been pieced together to allow the recreation of the film's action set-pieces, with a predetermined number of hostages scattered between the levels. In addition to the basic recreations listed below, McClane fights a number of running battles on the stairwells as he picks his way up to the next level. The basic theme to completing a level involves killing all the terrorists within using a scanner to determine where they are. When the level has been cleared, a bomb is primed and McClane is left with thirty seconds to locate the device. As soon as the bomb is touched the level is automatically defused and access to one of the later levels is given:

PARKING LOT:

Terrorists guard the van they used to enter the building, as pitched battles, using concrete support pillars as cover, rage on. McClane begins the level with his trusty pistol, but picking off assailants allows the player to upgrade to machine guns and grenades.



BOARD ROOM



BURNING CARS



GANTRY



HELICOPTER



PLAZA RECEPTION

MaintenANCE DUCTS:

The terrorists have started to rally the hostages up on to the roof for a deal being struck with the FBI agents. In the meantime, McClane has his hands full picking off straggling terrorists as he works his way through the wires and pipes which form the obstacles in this stage.

PARTY BALLROOM:

Having seen the film more than a dozen times, I still cannot place a ballroom scene. Still, the setting provides plenty of balcony positions for Gruber's newly-created sniper teams. The high vantage point afforded by the balconies makes them hard to kill, but leaves McClane an open target.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION:

True to the film, the incomplete floors of the Nakatomi building provide excellent hiding places amongst the chaos left by the builders over Christmas. Sadly, it also means that greater open spaces must be braved to rescue the hostages scattered throughout this stage.

EXECUTIVE OFFICES:

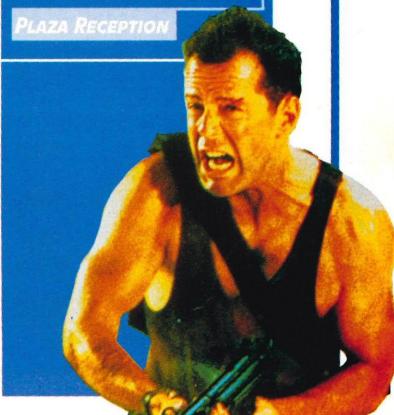
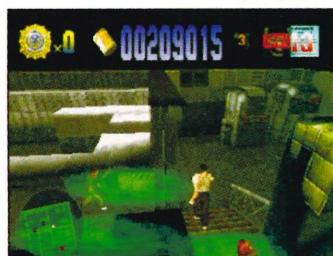
The setting for the infamous scene where McClane picks glass from his feet, is recreated as closely as possible. More hostages are being held in these plush wood-panelled offices. Care must be taken to avoid shattering the glass partitions to avoid the aforementioned glass-removing scenes...

COMPUTER ROOM:

Bound and gagged hostages are being held beside the computer terminals which the Corporation uses to communicate with the world. Following the ruckus in the ballroom, several snipers have moved up to terminate the stricken Nakatomi employees — therefore time is of the essence.

EXECUTIVE QUARTERS:

With the terrorist number now severely depleted, Gruber and his remaining men are holed up at the top of the building — using captured SWAT members as their ticket to freedom. Each hostage is being held in a locked room, and Gruber and his men are in no mood to let them go...



THE ROOFTOP MISSION BEGINS WITH McCCLANE ESCORTING A GAGGLE OF HOSTAGES THROUGH A GAUNTLET OF ENEMY FIRE.

AS THE HOSTAGES MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE EXIT, THE TERRORISTS TRY TO SHOOT THEM.



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

To assist McClane in the Nakatomi Plaza, he has a mini map for reference. On the bottom-left of the screen, the map shows everything within a ten (game) feet radius, with key points marked on screen as coloured dots. The red dots mark the position of the roving terrorists, and the map is invaluable for sneaking up on those who hang around in groups. Blue dots detail the position of the hostages, and as soon as McClane frees them they head for the nearest exit. Unless a terrorist finds them first, that is. Finally, white dots represent the position of power-ups and supplies (see box below), while the flashing red dot appears when all terrorists have been shot, and marks the position of the primed bomb which will detonate in thirty seconds.



THE POSITION OF ENEMY ATTACKERS IS SHOWN TO THE BOTTOM-RIGHT OF THE SCREEN.

URGH! A TWINKIE...

In addition to the extra bombs and weapons which aid McClane's journey to Han Gruber, a number of extra handy items line the route. For the most part the following are hidden in crates and boxes littering the levels and automatically relinquish their contents when McClane walks into them. However, as the game gets tougher, the rewards become rarer and are normally only given for the safe rescue of hostages. The most common power-up are cans of Fox-branded Cola, hot dogs and typically New York cop food which replenish a few stars of McClane's depleted badge, while the green first aid packs go one better than twice the power of junk food. Ask any nutritionist. Similarly, a better target are the full medical kits which replace all lost health, while the bullet-proof jackets which pop up occasionally offer temporary protection against enemy gunfire.

FREEZE! NYPD!

Needless to say, when fighting an army of international terrorists – especially those in *Die Hard Trilogy* who are on hand with witty comments such as 'die cowboy!' or the equally varied 'die yankee!' – there is going to be the odd occasion when McClane is on the wrong end of a bullet. For the most part, it has to be said that the terrorists are a tad dim and it is not unusual for the McClane sprite to hide away in a recess or corridor, popping off the odd shot to take out any bad guys who happen to walk past! However, even the dimmest terrorist toting a bloody great machine gun can't miss every time, and every time McClane takes hit, the sprite reels slightly before he can fire back. More importantly though, one of three police badges at the top-left of the screen is reduced piece by piece, and if all three are whittled away the McClane sprite drops to his knees with a groan and everything fades to white. Thankfully, as with each of the three games on the CD, Fox have made provision for a memory card and so McClane's progress through the tower can be saved after every level on one of eight spaces.

HANS! BOOBY!

In keeping with shoot 'em up trends, *Die Hard* contains a number of boss terrorists who prove significantly harder to kill. For the most part, the levels involve defusing the bombs after a killing spree, but the bosses are marked by a large red banner indicating their status, and can withstand more shots than your average bad guy. When McClane succeeds in felling the boss, the level is over, and he is offered a chance of grabbing extra weapons as he takes a series of hostages to the building's roof while protecting them from enemy fire. Points are awarded for every hostage saved, and this is a pattern that is prevalent throughout the game.



THE 'BOSS' SPRITE PROVES MORE RESILIENT TO McCCLANE'S SHOTS, AND SUMMONS EXTRA HELP AS THE PAIR BATTLE IT OUT.

GAME OVER



GAME OVER



GAME OVER



Die Harder

It's Christmas again, and McClane awaits Holly's arrival at Dulles airport. But a terrible plan is afoot.

SAME GUY, DIFFERENT PLACE...

A year after the events of the first film, *Die Harder* begins with McClane awaiting his wife's arrival at Washington Dulles Airport. With the flight already delayed due to the blizzard conditions, our heroic cop stumbles across a new terrorist plot as he awaits news of a landing time. As Holly circles above, it transpires that a renegade marine corp has been enlisted to free a corrupt dictator. By patching into the control tower's CPU, the marines have the power of life and death over the planes above, and threaten to blow them up one by one until their demands for the dictator's release are met. With a number of the marines at the airport to meet the prison ship transporting the despot to his next incarceration, McClane must locate their operations base and fend off the rescue before the planes run out of fuel.

Following the plot of *Die Hard* almost to the word (with the obligatory addition of thousands more men to the guerrilla army), the second game takes the form of a stunning *Virtua Cop* clone. Starting in the arrival lounge, the game takes the form of an 'in-screen' shoot 'em up, with the player viewing the action through McClane's 'eyes' as the polygon terrorists pour on screen. The entire airport area is created using polygons to ensure a full 3D play arena, and McClane follows a set route through each of the ten stages.



GUNNING FOR YOU



An added bonus is that *Die Harder* is both mouse and light gun compatible — so if you were daft enough to buy *Horned Owl*, at least the gun will prove useful for something! Of these control systems, the mouse is slightly preferable as moving cursor is made much easier and allows for some real rapid and accurate shooting. It may not be the most obvious use for the mouse, but it's by far the best so far...

ROCKETS PROVIDE A DEVASTATING EXPLOSION.

GIVE ME SOME SKIN



Although comparisons to *Virtua Cop* are inevitable (and justified), all credit goes to Probe for expanding upon the original idea. As in past *Virtua Cop/Operation Wolf*-style games, the enemies throw grenades and knives which can be deflected with a well-timed bullet, and extra energy can be added to McClane's inventory by, again, shooting it. However, where *Die Harder* really scores well from its rivals is in its appearance. While *Virtua Cop* (and indeed the sequel) feature faceless polygon villains, the 3D sprites McClane faces have had skins overlaid onto their polygon-based bodies to add extra realism. As such, as opposed to the clones Sega owners pick off, lucky Sony owners face terrorists with beards, bad hats, and ginger hair — a small point, I'm sure you'll agree, but an added extra which works superbly as the game runs.



WELCOME TO DULLES

Die Harder follows the film extremely closely, with the preset path taking the player from the outside of the airport, into the passenger lounges, and eventually on to the runway where the bad guys are making their getaway. Based as it is on an action movie, Fox's *Virtua Cop* clone allows for plentiful opportunities for mass destruction, with the player's cursor used to pick off the terrorist troops who parade on screen, and to blow the crap out of the surroundings, too. The latter adds a (very) slight strategic slant to the proceedings, as the high-calibre guns can be used to blow out ceilings, ignite kiosks or booths housing snipers, or even provide cover against enemy fire. With the airport suitably decimated, the action duly takes its in-screen shooting to the church, and into the enemy's getaway plane via a snow speeder shoot-out.



COMMENT

GARY

Can't say the two sequels ever did much for me, but I like *Die Hard* the movie. Ironically, my favourite segments of the game are *Die Harder* (the *Virtua Cop* clone we've been waiting for – and so much better) and *Die Hard with a Vengeance*. Chasing through New York, trying to reach the bombs, or the bomb cars, is quite brilliant. Splatter those pedestrians, use your windscreen wipers to wash away the gore. Cool. This is one of those games – with a lot of meat, a lot of skill and some damned excellent gameplay – that you'll still be playing and enjoying again and again. While *Die Hard* and *Die Hard with a Vengeance* are great games, *Die Harder*'s shoot 'em up is the winner here.



COP THIS

Mixing elements of *Doom* with the basic *Virtua Cop* premise, McClane's trip across the airport and its surrounding area sees him gathering some rather tasty weaponry. With his ever-present LA PD-issue pistol acting as the standard weapon, all manner of machine guns and rifles appear in icon form, ready for use. Each weapon varies in its capabilities, with some slow to load, others using smaller magazines which tend to run out quickly, and the calibres of bullets offering different reactions from their targets.

AK47 MACHINE GUN:

Rapid fire across a wide range, put doesn't allow for accuracy where hostages are being held. 'Sorry, pal', as the sampled Willis voice is prone to saying...

RPG ROCKET:

A one-shot weapon, but capable of killing four or five terrorists with a well-placed shot. Again, not so hot for saving hostages, but the blast range reveals loads of graphical touches, such as the sprinkler system or monitors falling on to bad guys.

FRAGMENTATION GRENADE:

A smaller radius of destruction than the RPG Rocket, but allows for more accuracy when used. The resultant explosion leaves terrorists blown to shreds – complete with charred skeletons thrown across the screen.

SHOTGUN:

Extremely powerful and blows the recipient right across the screen, but slow to reload leaving McClane rather vulnerable. Hits to the player are shown via a nice rippling effect across the screen.

SHOTGUN WITH EXPLOSIVE SHELLS:

Collecting extra weapons is a matter of shooting the icons as they appear. If McClane is already holding the shotgun and these appear, shooting the icon will stock his gun with these potent devices.

ASSAULT RIFLE:

One of the deadliest guns in the game. Fast and the bullets rip through virtually anything, but on the downside the gun empties very quickly and its speed of fire means accuracy isn't always possible. Cue "sorry, pal" sample...

M60:

A belt fed gun, which is as powerful as the Assault Rifle, but has more ammo available and consequently lasts considerably longer. All the problems with the Assault Rifle apply to this.

MP5 SUB MACHINE GUN:

A small UZI-style rapid-firing weapon. One of the best guns for rapid response, but its relatively small 9mm shells may require several hits before the tenacious bad guys turn up their toes.



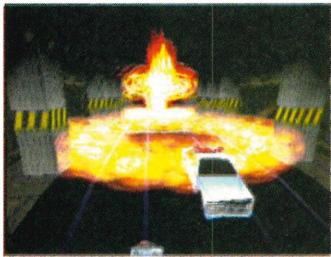
THE WEAPONS ONLY HAVE A FINITE LIFE SPAN, SO SPEED IS OF THE ESSENCE WHEN USING THEM. ROCKETS TEND TO LAST FOR ONE EXPLOSION ONLY, WHILE THE TRACER BULLETS MAKE TARGETTING EASIER AND LAST UNTIL THE CURRENT CLIP IS EXHAUSTED.



Die Hard

with a Vengeance

There's no such thing as 'third time lucky' for McClane, as Han Gruber's brother seeks revenge, using a grudge against the NYPD cop to cover up plans for an audacious heist. But McClane has got a new partner, and the trilogy is set to end with a bang.



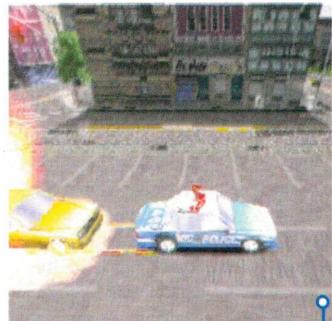
WACKY RACES

The weakest of the three films, *Die Hard with a Vengeance* doesn't have the explosive set-pieces of the first two, so Probe have lifted a number of driving sequences from the film, beginning with the first action sequence where McClane and Zeus jump into a car and try to reach Central Park before Gruber sets off the bomb he has left there. During the development of the game, Probe sent one of their graphic artists over to the Big Apple to video the streets of the city during a taxi ride. As such, the game's recreations of Harlem, Wall Street, Central Park, and Chinatown are accurate renditions of the city – even down to double-parked cars, traffic light positions, and subway stations. Following this, though McClane and the unseen (but heard – his sampled voice yells which way the bomb is!) Zeus steal a cop car and head into the aqueduct beneath the city as they chase 'Simon's' convoy in a race to reach a key explosive charge before the terrorists can. The basic game screen offers one of four views of McClane's car, and below this is a map indicator which pinpoints the position of the bombs which, if rammed by the pairs' car, are detonated but only across a small radius. As such, what follows is a visually-stunning trip across the Big Apple in search of the vehicles or bins Gruber is using to hide his explosives – with all of New York seemingly out to stop our hero from saving them!

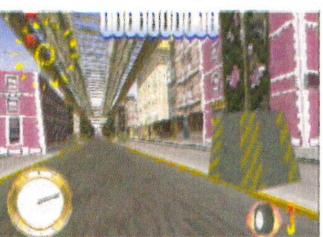
TAXI

In addition to the yellow taxi McClane uses in the film, the game offers a further fourteen vehicles for his use. This is an extension of a germ of an idea Probe had for the game a few years back, where the initial idea for the trilogy was a 3D road racer with minimal nods to the events of the films. Expanding upon the scenes where McClane and Zeus zoom around New York, Probe have left VW Beetles, a fork lift truck, an ambulance and even a school bus ready to roll. Each vehicle has different attributes (speed, etc),

while the ambulance also has a handy siren which proves essential for clearing a path through busy traffic. These handily-parked vehicles are shown as blue dots on the game map, but changing is a risk – unless extra time is found along the way.



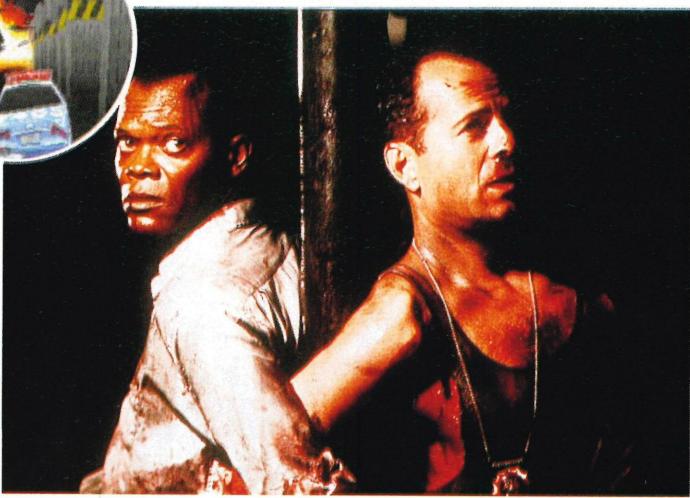
ENTERING THE PARKING LOT ALLOWS MCCLANE TO CHANGE HIS CAR.



THE IN-CAR VIEW MAKES FOR A FASTER GAME.



PILE UPS IN RUSH HOUR BECOMING INCREASINGLY REGULAR.



SAY SIMPLE SIMON TO THE PIEMAN...

... "Let me taste your wares." Yes, a tenuous link, but one which offers the chance to explain the power-ups left scattered across the Big Apple nevertheless. As McClane and Zeus scatter pedestrians, collide with cars and scream around corners, lettered icons can be found in the road, marked 'Extra Time', 'Launch' or 'Turbo'. Collecting these (which is effected by steaming right over them!) extending 'Simon's timer deadline or adds extra power to the car. As soon as the timer starts reaching critical a ghostly watch face is superimposed on to the screen as the seconds tick away, and if McClane and Zeus fail, the screen pans out to watch a rendered 'Simon' watching New York burn from afar.

COSTS A BOMB

Acting a boss-style vehicle, 'Simon' also plants Bomb cars in the city which drive around until their timers detonate. Once again, McClane and Zeus are left to find these, but extra turbos are needed in order to ram the TNT-toting vehicle. A damage bar at the bottom of the screen is whittled away with every successful nudge the player manages, and when the bomb car's power is fully depleted the city is safe until the next wave.



ALAS, McCCLANE AND ZEUS ARE TOO LATE, AND CENTRAL PARK IS RIPPED ASUNDER BY A HUGE FIRE-BALL. 'GAME OVER.'

THE BOMB CAR CHASE SET IN THE MIDDLE OF CENTRAL PARK.



SOMETHING ROTTEN IN BIG APPLE

McClane and Zeus' chase across the Big Apple is impeded by all the objects you'd expect to see in a big city. As the player guides their chosen vehicle through the three-lane streets, care must be taken to avoid the following as a crash causes the vehicle to stall, wasting valuable time.

TRAFFIC

Certain areas of the city become grid-locked at set times, making them a definite 'no go'. While it is always inconvenient to find a detour, it nearly always saves valuable time.

PEDESTRIANS:

The citizens of New York have obviously never heard of the Green Cross Man, and wander aimlessly in front of cars as they hurry to work or whatever. Running them down results in a spectacular piece of motion-capture, but slows our heroes down.

TRAFFIC LIGHTS:

Only a minor hazard, but the patrolling police cars are extra vigilant for those mad enough to gun through a red light – also doubles the chances of mowing people down.

SUBWAY TRAINS:

Occasionally, the roads converge with subway tracks, and drivers are obliged to wait at the barriers while the train passes – obliged, that is, unless the driver is out to save the city and is prepared to risk a possible collision to get there on time.

FIRE HYDRANTS:

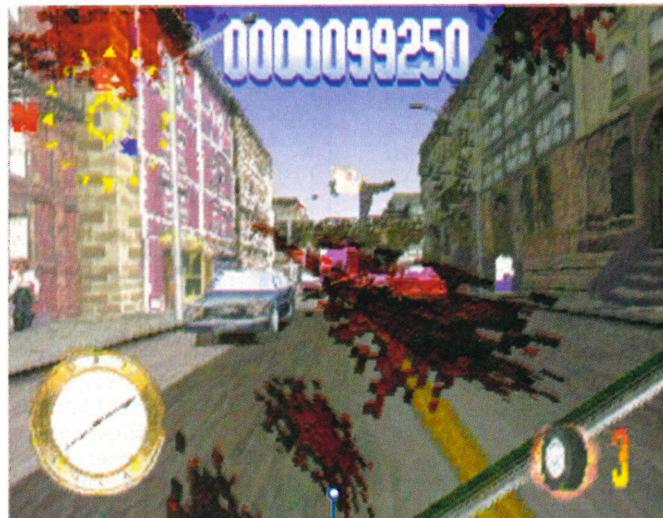
If a hydrant is nudged, it unleashes a powerful jet of water – enough to blow several cars into each other to create an unwanted pile-up. Alternatively, a well-timed nudge can put pursuing cars off the trail.

WIRE BINS:

Roll into the road when hit, and rarely cause that much grief – apart from spewing litter everywhere. However, Klaus Gruber is a fan of planting bombs in them, resulting in massive explosions if one is triggered by contact. Better safe than sorry, then...

OTHER VEHICLES:

These include, oil tankers, dump trucks, ordinary Joes on their way to work, and selfish Taxi drivers. All behave independently of each other, and block the road, stop, or pull out when the player least expects it. Just like New York, in fact.



THOSE COMEDY WINDSCREEN WIPERS IN ACTION.



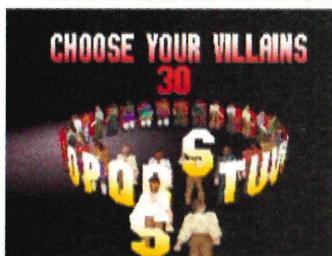
BANG, BANG! YOU'RE DEAD!



Another common thread throughout *Die Hard Trilogy* is a comically excessive amount of gore. As McClane runs, scrolls and drives through the three games, anybody and everyone offers potential for blood-letting. Depending on the weapon McClane is using in *Die Hard*, shot terrorists twitch as the bullets hit home before rolling to the floor in a number of dramatic ways, with blood splatting everywhere and eventually pooling on the ground! Similarly, in the *Die Harder* section, bad guys fall to the ground clutching stomachs when shot or spin around in true ballet style as the player loses shot after shot at them – and if the player accidentally shoots a corpse, they twitch grotesquely with every hit. The most OTT gore, however, has been saved for the *Die Hard with a Vengeance* section. Whizzing around the tight corners and alleyways of New York was always going to be a perilous business, but the addition of jaywalkers and pedestrians makes things even more hairy. As the car whizzes towards the bomb, people scatter to avoid the car, while some are hit and spin off the bonnet. While this does remove points from McClane's tally, it's hilarious to watch and Probe have gone one better for players using the in-car view. If a pedestrian is hit full-on, their blood spatters all over the screen, with a windscreen wiper automatically swishing across the screen to clear the mess!

THREE IN ONE

One nice touch, is that an element of consistency runs throughout the three games. The weapons McClane fires in *Die Hard* return for *Die Harder*, and the three games are linked via series of rendered scenes lifted from the films. Preceding *Die Hard*, for example, is a scene where Hans Gruber pulls up to the front of the Nakatomi Plaza, while *Die Harder* is met with a snowy airport scene where all is quiet as the player starts the game, but where the Christmas tranquillity is wrecked by a police car ramming the airport's entrance. And finally, in keeping with the game's plentiful death-dealing opportunities (where blood spurts, terrorists are burnt to a crisp, and pedestrians are mown down), if the player attains a high score a circle of dead villains appears each brandishing a letter of the alphabet, and offering three acts as a fitting way to add your name to the top ten McClanes of the day!



PROBING DEEPER

Die Hard Trilogy is another title to emerge from Croydon-based Probe Interactive. The *Die Hard* idea has taken three years to reach fruition, with the original idea being to create a driving game wherein the player drove around cities in search of terrorists and used a number of vehicles (bulldozers, lorries, etc) to achieve a series of mission objectives. The initial code was less than spectacular, however, and resembled Core's less than stunning *Shellshock*. As Fox became more into the idea of getting into the video game scene, though, plans were made to create the three-in-one idea we see today. With Probe realising that the PlayStation was lacking a good *Virtua Cop* clone, one third fell into place, and that idea they had for a driving sequence was still rather appealing, too...

CRAZY LIKE A FOX



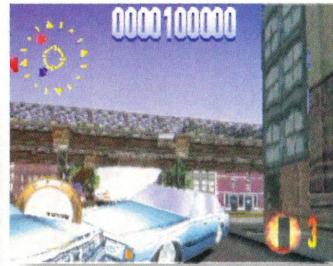
Die Hard Trilogy is the first game to emerge from Fox's distribution deal with EA. Having had dealings with Acclaim in the past (as seen with *Alien Trilogy*), the deal with EA is set to continue with games based on *Planet of the Apes*, numerous *Simpsons* spin-offs, and *Independence Day*, which is the next PlayStation movie-based title to emerge from the pair.

COMMENT

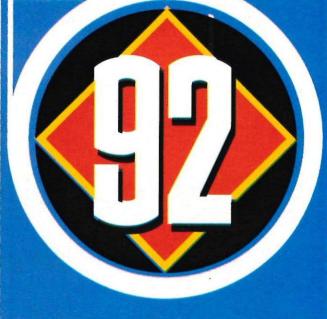
STEVE

Well, quite frankly *Die Hard Trilogy* makes previous compilation CDs rather redundant. Why bother with five titles from yesteryear when Fox Interactive put together a CD featuring three brand new ones? *Die Hard Trilogy* features three games which, while not being particularly stunning individually, gel together to create a stunning home recreation of the classic films. *Die Hard* is a smart little shoot 'em up in the *Loaded* vein, while *Die Harder* is a *Virtua Cop* clone that out-does the Sega original, and is one of the toughest shooting gallery games I have seen. But for me, the icing on an already very tasty cake is the *Die Hard with a Vengeance* driving game. The 3D locations are stunning, the car handles well, and the mission difficulty never veers into the impossible but always drives along the touch and go line leaving me on the edge of my seat as I attempted to reach the bombs in time. *Die Hard Trilogy* is a stunning package, and Fox deserve praise for bundling three very good games together when they could have released them separately.

RATING



| | |
|-------------|----|
| GRAPHICS | 92 |
| ANIMATION | 86 |
| SOUND FX | 92 |
| MUSIC | 91 |
| LASTABILITY | 93 |
| PLAYABILITY | 92 |
| OVERALL | 92 |



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GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
CONTINUES: N/A
SKILL LEVELS: 3

| | |
|---------|---------|
| RELEASE | JULY |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| BY | US GOLD |
| PLAYERS | 1-4 |

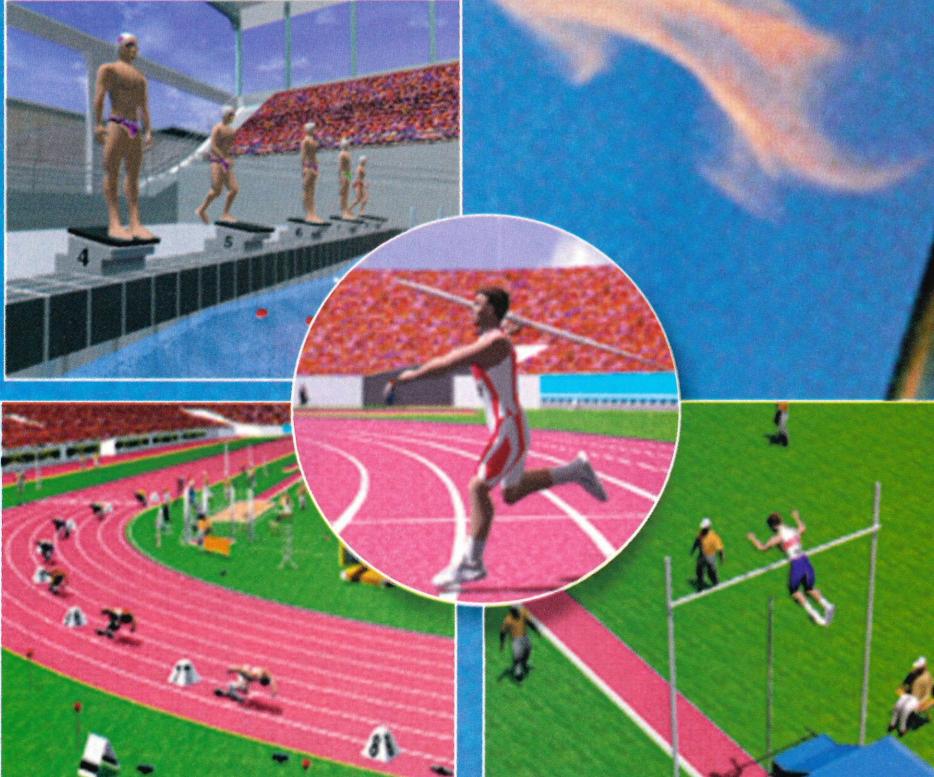


As video gaming comes full circle, with the PlayStation's new releases – a strange mixture of something old, something new, something borrowed, and something truly awful – US Gold follow up their tenuous *Olympic Soccer* release with a fifteen-event title sports title to take on the updated athletes in Konami's *Track and Field* brigade. In a classic example of 'anything they can do, we can do better', US Gold plan to usurp the Konami game by offering more sedately-paced alternatives to *Track and Fields* finger-blistering button pummelling. As such, in addition to alternatives to the expected track and throwing events, *Olympic Games: Atlanta '96* features archery, rapid-fire and skeet shooting, fencing and weight-lifting. In fact, the game is so comprehensive that all that appears to be missing are equestrian and polo events – presumably down to the difficulties of motion capturing a polygon horse. I'm buggered if I'd even want to attempt it...

Following an introductory sequence celebrating one-hundred years of the games – which juxtaposes the days of the ancient Greeks and today's Reebok-clad athletes for both graphical effect and to state that, actually, the games are even older than the centenary being celebrated – a full array of options allow the user to prepare for the medal attempts ahead and to master the different, but equally gruelling, button-pounding technique the game uses.

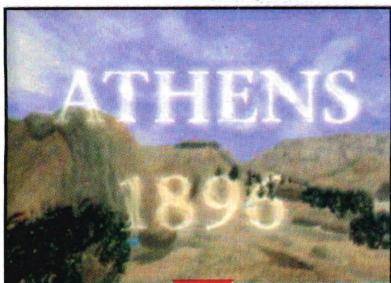
Having then slipped into the track suit of the nation of their choice, an introductory sequence unfolds and the player is duly handed control of the champion for the event ahead, and with some events spread across over five heats it seems more than likely that ardent Olympic contenders will end up with muscles to rival those of Fatima Whitbread.

Olympic Games: Atlanta '96



STANDING ON CEREMONY

The Olympics is famed for its ostentatious opening ceremonies (who can forget the dozens of Doves released to celebrate peace in 1982, only to fly straight into the torch's flames!), and *Olympic Games: Atlanta '96* recreates all the pomp and ceremony. A rendered intro jumps between ancient Greece and modern day events, replacing contemporary athletes with statues of past Grecian masters, and depicting the spirit of good sport moving between the two. Similarly, the huge Olympic torch is ignited, burning away throughout the fifteen events, and then, once the final medals are dished out and the games are declared over, the screen darkens as fireworks erupt behind a rapidly fading overview of the arena. Very tasteful.



ON YOUR MARKS

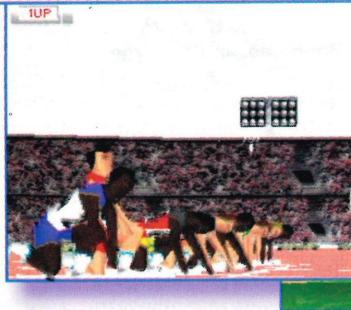
Rather than inducing blisters via left and right finger motions across two buttons, this game uses an easier method – pressing two buttons at once. To build speed during events requiring a

run up, would-be medalists can be seen hunched over the pad reducing the length of their digits via repeated pummelling – while the second hand is used to effect the jumps and throws.

100M SPRINT

Method: Stop me if you've heard this. Rapid smacking of the two run buttons, with the CPU controlling the duck past the line.

Effectiveness: With something this simple, you can't go wrong. Certainly less painful than the Konami event.



DISCUS

Method: Tap the build up buttons until the bar reaches optimum speed. A small marker will speed towards a line. Pressing the action button prompts the throw, while the length it is held determines the angle.

Effectiveness: The speed the bar moves makes accuracy hard, but makes timing even more important. Cool.



LONG JUMP

Method: Tap the two run buttons to begin the run, and a marker bar appears. The line on the bar indicates how close to the plate the jump is, while the jump button remains depressed to determine the angle.

Effectiveness: Misjudging the line makes for too many early jumps, but the system is effective – but the feeling of skill given by *Track and Field* is rarely there.



POLE VAULT

Method: Following the run up, two bars appear. As the player nears the bar, it's a case of stopping at the preset marker, at which point the pole bends. A new pointer appears, and pressing the button at the marked point finishes the move.

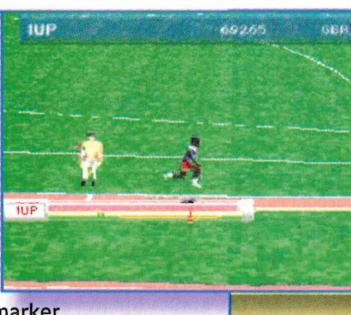
Effectiveness: One of the more skilful events, requiring true precision and timing to attain the loftier heights.



TRIPLE JUMP

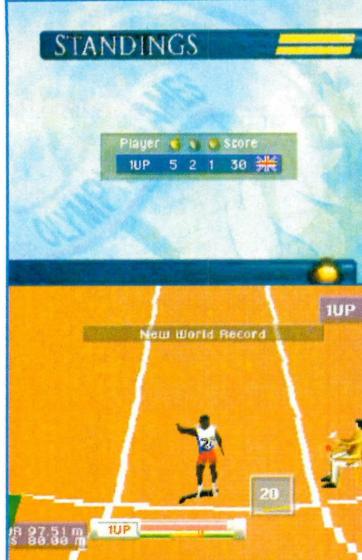
Method: Following a lengthy run up, a marker appears to indicate the jumping point, and reappears when the next step of the 'hop, skip and jump' routine comes into play. Each movement is given an optimum time which is depicted by a secondary marker.

Effectiveness: The timing between moves is too precarious and skill doesn't really come into play. No real skill involved.



WARMING UP

Sitting through the full US Gold Olympic experience is harder work than vegging out in front of the real thing on the television. As such, the developers at Silicon Dreams have broken the game down into bite-size chunks for the more casual athlete. The events can be practised at any time, or groups of the events – all the field or shooting ones, for example – can be played together, with medals awarded during these ‘mini games.’ Similarly, participating in a full Olympics mimics the sitting around endured by our entrants while the rest of the world has a go. Waiting around for the Germans, French, Africans or whoever to step up for the archery or rapid-fire pistol shooting soon gets dull, but a secondary trip to the options menu allows the user to switch off the CPU contestants so that the game is speeded up, and their scores are shown at the end of the round.



COMMENT

ALEX

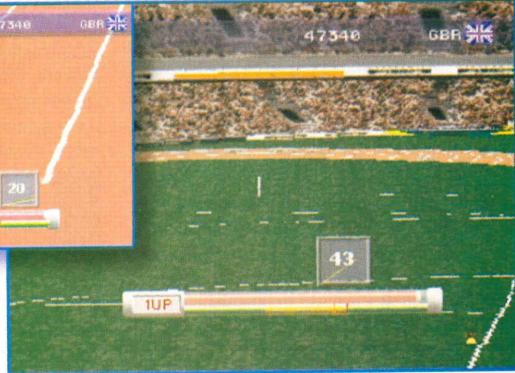
I'm a fan of *Track and Field*.

Even though *Olympic Games: Atlanta '96* boasts more events, the execution of each doesn't quite match Konami's effort. This is partly because of the control system, which is incredibly simple to use and as a result makes the events much easier to win.

Throwing events like the hammer are much more basic, having to concentrate only on building up power and the throw bar, rather than the direction, power and angle of the throw. Building up power is less difficult too, full speed reached by ‘rubbing’ the buttons as opposed to furiously tapping them. So it's not quite as good as *Track and Field* then. It's not bad, true, but it lacks the visual finesse and honed gameplay of its competitor.

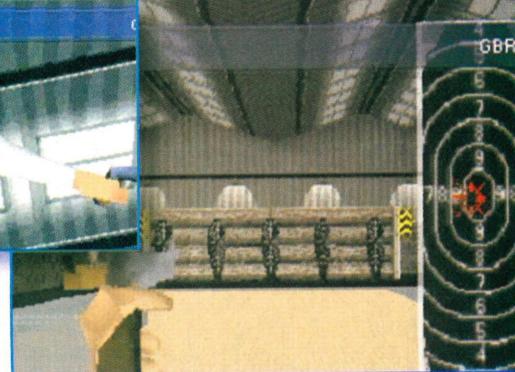
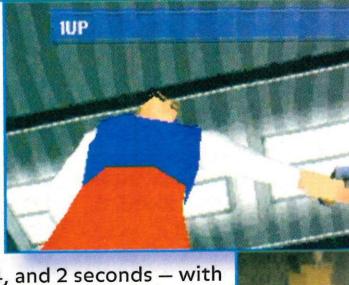
JAVELIN

Method: As the player comes to the end of the run up, another marker line appears with a coloured bar rapidly approaching it. This indicates the closeness of the throw to the fault line, and once the throw is made, the tried and tested method of holding the button to increase the angle comes into play.



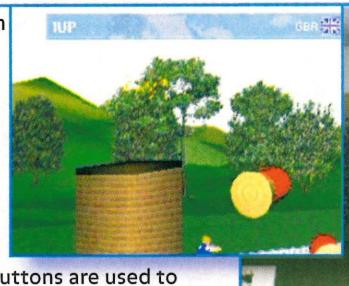
RAPID FIRE PISTOL

Method: Taking the game into new territories, the player shoots at targets marked with concentric shapes – the closer to the centre, the higher the score. The Dpad is used to position the cursor, but the boards are turned after 8, 4, and 2 seconds – with the time limit shown as a decreasing coloured bar.



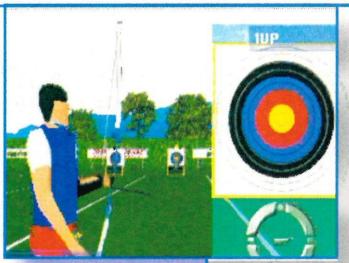
SKEET SHOOTING

Method: Viewed from afar, the player's on screen marksman is seen loading his two cartridges before Alan Davies shouts ‘pull!’. As the two skeets fly across screen, the Dpad is used to track their movements, while the two run buttons are used to empty the left and right barrels respectively.



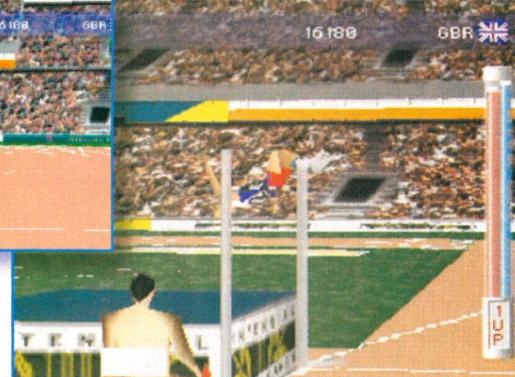
ARCHERY

Method: The Dpad is used to position a sight over the target. However, below the main target is a small wind indicator, detailing the direction and speed of the cross winds. Bearing this in mind, six rounds of six shots proceed to offer a gold medal for the highest scorer.



HIGH JUMP

Method: Having selected the height of the jump, button bashing builds up the speed of the run. As the bar is neared, pressing the action button brings a ‘jump’ bar into effect. As this climb bar rises to similar heights to the run up metre, pressing the action button again sends the athlete over the bar.



Effectiveness: A more logical control system than that of the Konami game.

400M

Method: The 400m event is all about pace. Tapping the run buttons sends the on-screen Linford pegging it around the circuit, but a secondary stamina is constantly decreasing – and the faster the player runs, the quicker it dwindles. As such, a balance between the two is required, while leaving enough for a final sprint.

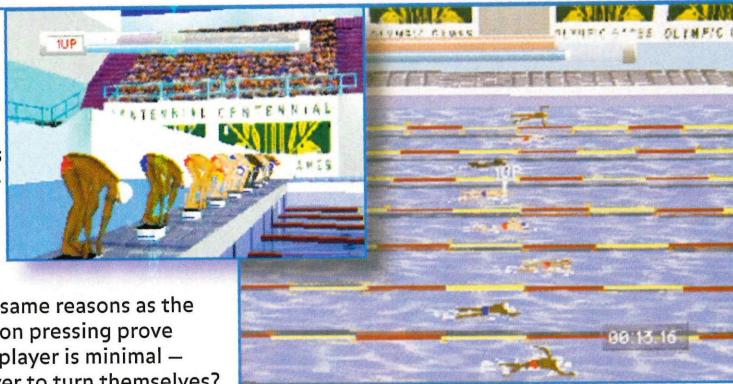
Effectiveness: Difficult to judge the balance between the two bars. There's no real feeling of pace, as running is a matter of 'stop start' button presses.



SWIMMING

Method: Basically, the swimming event is the 400m run with nose clips and a smell of chlorine. As the swimmers crawl up and down two lengths of the pool, the speed bar versus stamina bar equation is brought back into play. Turning is automatically effected by the machine.

Effectiveness: Fails for all the same reasons as the 400m. Sporadic bursts of button pressing prove tedious, and control from the player is minimal – would it have hurt for the player to turn themselves?



HAMMER

Method: Similar to the discus, with the run up buttons building up the speed of the spins, while pressing the action button as the marker nears a line on the power bar sends the hammer flying. Oh, and we're back in 'long press equals higher angle' territory.

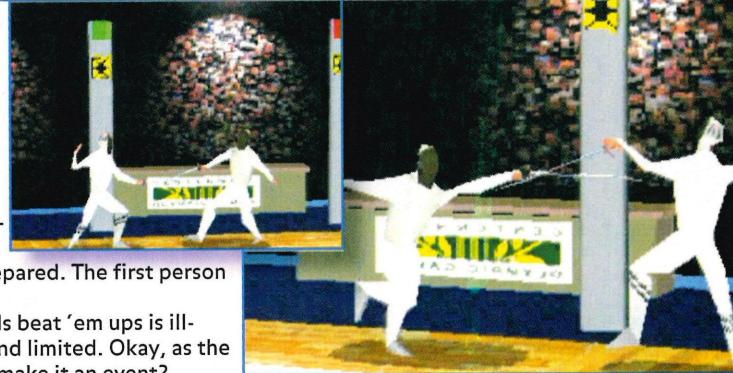
Effectiveness: An average event, with the marker system no better or worse than in the discuss event. Graphically, though, the hammer event looks daft, with the inflexible hammer resembling a golf club.



FENCING

Method: Using the Dpad to move the sprite, offensive swipes and defensive blocks are made using combinations of directional moves and button presses. Some of the moves cannot be defended against, but are balanced in that they leave the sprite exposed as they are prepared. The first person to four wins.

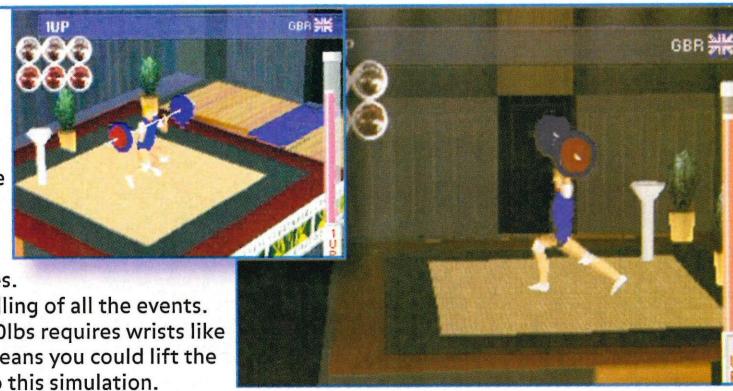
Effectiveness: A move towards beat 'em ups is ill-advised, and this is sluggish and limited. Okay, as the real thing isn't that fast, why make it an event?



WEIGHT LIFTING

Method: Frantic pummelling is needed to build up to full strength. When this is achieved, pressing the action button when it is at the same height prompts the 'jerk' move, while repeating the process is used for the 'lift'. As the player wavers, moving the Dpad compensates.

Effectiveness: The most gruelling of all the events. Attempting anything over 220lbs requires wrists like Popeye's – which probably means you could lift the real thing, and say bollocks to this simulation.



COMMENT

STEVE

If Konami's *Track and Field* is the Linford Christie of sports games, US Gold's game is best described as Kris Akabusi – ie it's good in places, but annoys the hell out of you after a while. Opting for the 'more is better' idea, *Olympic Games: atlanta '96* offers 15 events – four more than the Konami game – but they are such a strange mishmash that the middling and good ones (pole vault, high jump, archery, rapid-fire shooting) are dragged down by tedious offerings like the 400m and swimming. The control system is as uneven as the events, and while the power/marker bar system works well in the likes of high jump and weight lifting, it proves curiously hit or miss when it comes to the long and triple jumps. When this game is good, it really can be inspired, and admiration goes to Silicon Dreams who have taken a risk with some dodgy events. However, the overall feeling one is left with is one of indifference, and while the presentation is virtually faultless, the inconsistency ranks this as an amateur compared to *Track and Field*.

RATING

| | |
|-------------|----|
| GRAPHICS | 81 |
| ANIMATION | 76 |
| SOUND FX | 72 |
| MUSIC | 74 |
| LASTABILITY | 67 |
| PLAYABILITY | 73 |
| OVERALL | 70 |



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the maz

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IN A PICKLE

Weird experience marauding polka-dotted aliens, super hedged b/ds friends, danger, fire breathing, chilli peppers and one mad scientist are all out to get him.



cheesy



GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVE
CONTINUES: N/A
SKILL LEVELS: N/A

| | |
|---------|------------------|
| RELEASE | OUT NOW (IMPORT) |
| PRICE | £ IMPORT |
| BY | NAMCO |
| PLAYERS | N/A |

Namco 3 Museum: Vol 3



Namco's tiptoe through their extensive back catalogue of coin-op classics reaches its third instalment, as we reach the early Eighties, when sprites were shedding their monochromatic overcoats and opting for two, even four-coloured skins and when the state-of-the-art was anything with more than six levels. At this time, Namco were riding on the crest of a huge PAC-MAN wave, which saw the little yellow dot-gobbler starring in his own TV cartoon (preceded by Roland Rat, now presumably a dusty, inanimate heap in Carlton's store cupboard), adorning pants and lunch boxes everywhere and spawning a rash of sequels and imitations.

Namco's releases around this time were an eclectic bunch, ranging from the obligatory sequel to *PAC-MAN* – *Ms PAC-MAN* – through to the maddeningly playable *Dig Dug*. However, while these were undoubtedly highs, the sequel to *Pole Position* never really caught the public's attention, and releases such as *Phozon* and *The Tower of Druaga* were destined for the obscurity. *Cutie-Q* and *Mappy* were languishing in.

By far the most popular game for the Japanese team, though, was a logical extension of the *Space Invaders* idea. As people started to lose interest in the monochromatic invaders and their limited appeal, Namco raised the stakes with their own *Galaxians*. Featuring full colour (well, eight), *Galaxians* once again pitted a lone star fighter against alien hordes who moved from left to right at the top of the screen, but now the invaders were brave enough to attack the player, swooping down the screen in groups of two or three. Earth's defence against a long line of sprite invaders had stepped up a gear, and now Namco were abetting the green-skinned foes...



GALAXIAN WAS AN INTERESTING VARIATION ON SPACE INVADERS.

WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

As with past Museums, Volume 3 plays host to six 'classic' Namco titles. The games can be played individually, or alternatively the player is invited to bone up on the history of each title and how to play them:

GALAXIAN

This, the logical successor to *Space Invaders*, was one of the first shoot 'em ups to boast colour, and also added swooping hordes to the expected left and right-scrolling gang of aliens. As before, the aim is to blow away the alien hordes using your trusty starship, with extra points added for blowing away aliens as they swoop down the screen. It's all familiar stuff, with an extra life awarded after 5000 points, and comes from a time when Continues were but a figment of someone's imagination; the world was lost to the Galaxian hordes if all lives were lost.



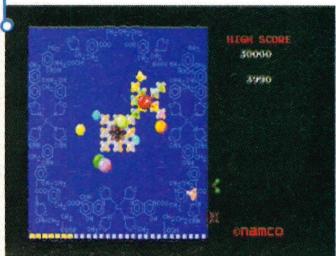
POLE POSITION II

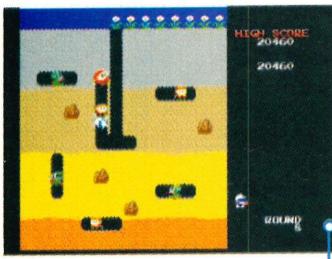
The first game appeared on *Museum Volume 2*, and the sequel is another run around a series of tracks as the player aims to take the titular *Pole Position*. With more tracks than the previous game (including practice, a tortuous Namco circuit, and a sea front one), larger sprites and slightly better handling on the car, *Pole Position II* is a tighter game than its predecessor. The time-limits are strict, and collisions with other cars results in instant death for both parties, thus wasting even more valuable time. Similarly, straying off the road reduces the car's acceleration, and makes qualifying virtually impossible.



PHOZON

The video game equivalent of a logic test. The little-seen *Phozon* coin-op marries reflexes with speed of thought, as the player is asked to replicate an increasingly complex number of shapes by collecting atoms and protons that float around the play area. In the centre of the screen is a pattern and the player steers a small marker around the single-screen play area, attempting to attach the floating atoms to create the same shape. However, a series of bubbles also prowl the screen, and contact with these means death – a task that gets harder, as the shapes get both more complex and larger.





DIG DUG INVOLVES OVER-INFLATING THE BAD GUYS.

WHAT'S THE SCORE?

As is the norm when scoring compilation CDs, you'll notice that the final score panel leaves the Graphics, Sound, Playability, etc columns blank. This is due to the varied contents of *Namco Museum Volume 3*, and the final mark is thus the reviewer's thoughts on the compilation's overall value for money and how well the CD fares as a potential purchase.

MUSEUM PIECE

In addition to the six games, Namco have created a 3D museum where the cabinets and information about the games can be found. Anyone familiar with past visits to the *Namco Museums* will recognise the format, but the third game has undergone a very impressive lick of paint. Having been welcomed by a receptionist, themed rooms based on the games await the player's inspection, with the main room detailing tips, rules, and pictures of cabinets and assorted merchandise (*Dig Dug* Pogs, for example), alongside digitised pictures of the original PCBs! Beyond these chambers then lies a room containing the original cabinet (from which the games can be played), and which resembles scenes from the game — Ms PACMAN, for example, is found in the corner of her PACHouse, complete with PACMAN happily sitting on the PACBog.

COMMENT

GARY

For a sad, nostalgia crumble like me, these retro discs ought to be something of a godsend. Yet all the games I actually like — *Galaga* on Volume 1 and *Xevious* on Volume 2 — actually fail to live up to that rose-tinted aspect. Not so with Volume 3. *Pole Position II* is all right, *The Tower of Druaga* is briefly fun, *Dig Dug* is amusing and *Ms PACMAN* is a tedious and mediocre as its progenitor. No, for me, life is great once again with an arcade-perfect port of *Galaxian*. Along with *Space Invaders* (hurry up, someone, and release that), *Galaxian* is a true part of my teenage years and one that hasn't tarnished with age. Frankly, *Galaxian* is worth the price of admission to this particular museum alone.

MS PACMAN

Instantly recognisable as female thanks to the bow on her head, Ms PACMAN's goal in life is the same as that of her husband/boyfriend/brother/one-night stand/whatever. With Inky, Binky and the rest of the ghosts now more intelligent than before, Ms PACMAN's life is spent trying to clear screens of dots and eating the power pills so she can chase the ghosts for a change. This time, though, the ghosts are also considerably faster than before, and catch Ms PACMAN with ease. Other new additions are floating segments of fruit worth extra points, and attractive pictures around the side of the maze.



DIG DUG

One of Namco's better titles, *Dig Dug* drops a miner into what appears to be an ant farm inhabited by number of dragons and what appear to be footballs wearing goggles. Tunnelling through the mud, the basic aim is to walk up to the said beasts and extend an air pipe towards them using the X button. The enemy is then trapped and repeated presses of the X button inflates the critter until it pops. This process is then repeated until the screen is cleared. As the game progresses, rocks are added which can be dropped on enemy heads, but the monsters start moving between holes in an attempt to chase the player.



COMMENT

STEVE

As the games are progressing, the *Namco Museum Volumes* are undoubtedly offering more value for money, but this third trip down memory lane still suffers from the variable quality of the six games. For me, the highlight of the CD is my old favourite *Dig Dug*, which is every bit as enjoyable as when I used to play it in the lobby at Chichester swimming pool. Likewise, *Galaxian* is still a laugh, and *Phozon* — while not a game I remember — is one of the best single-screen games I have ever played, and *Ms PACMAN* is enjoyable, if too similar to the first game. But that still leaves *The Tower of Druaga* and *Pole Position II* and neither offers a great deal of entertainment within their limited range. *Pole Position II* suffers from *Ms PACMAN* syndrome in that it is too similar to the first game, and *The Tower of Druaga* is just a dull and very repetitive maze game with unresponsive controls. The museum part is fun for half an hour, but personally the *Namco Museum* series won't get going until the likes of *Metrocross* and *PACLand* start gracing the CDs.

RATING

GRAPHICS
ANIMATION
SOUND FX
MUSIC

N/A

OVERALL



GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVE
CONTINUES: THREE
SKILL LEVELS: ONE

| | |
|---------|------------|
| RELEASE | JULY |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| BY | MICROPROSE |
| PLAYERS | 1 |



Just as the decade is famed for a 'feel good' factor which saw house prices soar, yuppies emerge, and vapid new romantics prancing about to forgettable synthesiser tracks, the Eighties saw a rash of glossy action films notable for their high production values, budget-breaking stars, huge box office takings and minimal plots. *Beverly Hills Cop*, *Firefox*, *Young Guns* and *Days of Thunder* were all examples of expensive budgets, big stars and stories which could be recounted within a ten-word sentence — but by far the most popular of the action flicks of the time was

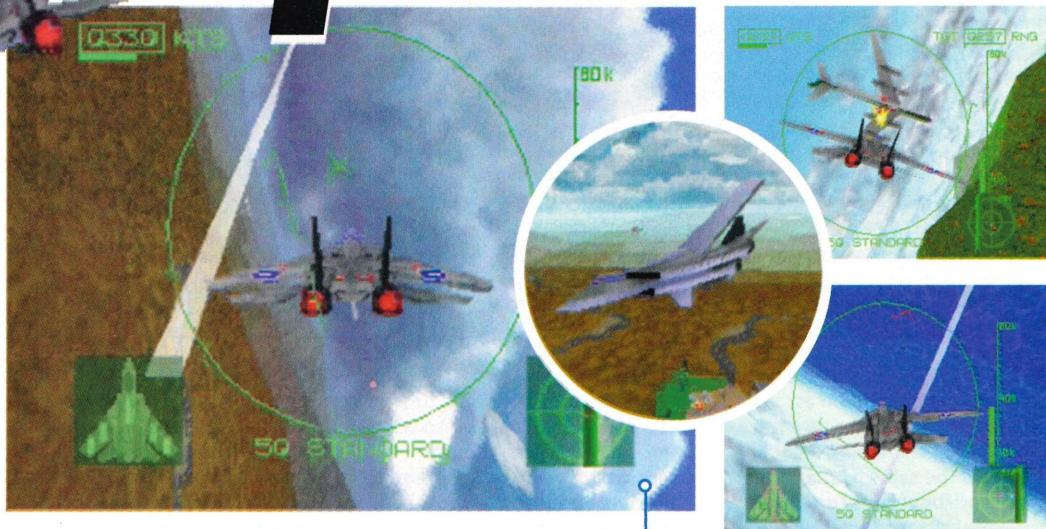
Tony Scott's *Top Gun*.

Resembling a well orchestrated pop video, Tom Cruise hit the big time as Maverick, a cocky rookie F14 pilot, who is about to complete his training and become one of the US's leading defenders. Competition is fierce in the academy, though, and for Maverick becoming 'Top Gun' (the accolade given to the academy's most proficient pilot) is everything. The minimal plot of Maverick's obvious rise to the top of the tree is bolstered with the obligatory angst scene when he messes up a mission and is heckled by his arch rival 'Ice Man' (Val Kilmer). He then falls for a female tutor at the academy (Kelly McGillis), gives her one (unless you're watching the ITV version), and feels refreshed enough to not only fight off Cuban bad guys but do it in such style that Ice Man thinks he's great. Oh yeah, and one-hit wonders Berlin get to play their number one 'smash' *Take My Breath Awaaaay* a few times, too.

The Microprose game follows this minimal plot with ease, casting the player as Maverick as he trains to become pilot and strives to be 'Top Gun.' With FMV sequences starring the bald guy who played the flight instructor (and the teacher in *Back to the Future*) resuming his role and a host of pilot wannabes, the skies are yours as training begins...



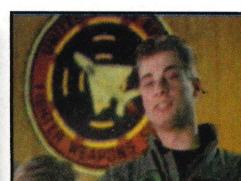
Fire at will Top Gun



AS THE PLANES GO INTO BATTLE, MISSILES ROAR PAST AND FOR A FEW SCANT SECONDS THE PULSE RACES. HOWEVER, THE FIRST YOU'LL KNOW OF A MISSILE IS WHEN THE BACK OF THE PLANE IS COVERED IN SMOKE.

YOU HAVE BEEN WATCHING...

Recreating the movie's competition between Maverick and Ice Man are a series of FMV sequences which act as links between the levels. Each of the training missions is introduced by the bullish instructor who indicates targets and berates pilots for weaknesses in previous missions. The sequences are viewed through the eyes of Maverick, with other members of the class turning to offer quips or, in the case of the decidedly unKilmer-esque Ice Man equivalent, throw down yet another gauntlet. As the rookies progress through training, the scenario is expanded through a number of news reports which detail unrest in Cuba which the reporters believe could result in a third world war — a conflict the newly-passed rookies soon find themselves embroiled in.



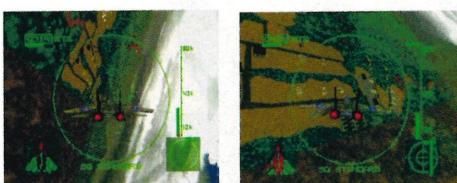
WHEN YOUR CO-PILOT ('GOOSE') SHOUTS THAT AN ENEMY MISSILE IS ON YOUR TAIL, DROPPING CHAFF AS A DECOY SAVES THE DAY. NOT THAT YOU SEE THE BENEFITS.

COMMENT

STEVE

Top Gun can be perceived as a beginners' flight simulator as opposed to the more involved *Gunship*. However, while its simplicity makes *Top Gun* a doddle to pick up, the missions are all much of a muchness, with Maverick taking to the skies, blowing everything in sight up and then sitting through another FMV sequence. Granted, the plot is quite neat, with the Cuban crisis throwing extra enemy fighters into the action, but the only real gameplay progression is that things get harder to hit. Similarly, the assaults on ground targets are so dreary and slow that I found myself almost looking forward to the next round of tedious dog-fighting. They say that variety is the spice of life, and *Top Gun* is conclusive proof. The basic idea is sound enough, and the game is slick and polished. But ultimately all the nice effects go to waste, as the next wave of fast-moving bogies soon prove tedious to outwit. Making the game steadily harder is no match for variety in levels, and as such *Top Gun: Fire at Will* comes across as as empty as the film it is based on.

MiG-GING YOU ALREADY



On first sight, *Top Gun* resembles Sega's hoary old *Afterburner* coin-op. The action is viewed from behind the player's F14, and the assorted targets appear in the distance, while missiles can be seen whizzing from behind. Despite the similarities, however, *Top Gun*'s missions are a tad more detailed – just a tad, mind – with the plot initially following Maverick through flight school, into a battle in Cuba where Russian-supplied MiGs are being used, and into Korea where more of the same occurs. Only harder. Surprisingly, though, *Top Gun*'s invite to travel the world reveals landscapes similar all over the globe. Korea, for example, shares the same rolling hills as Cuba, while to break things up every now and then the land is replaced by a sea-based mission. In addition to the dog-fighting which makes up the bulk of Maverick's missions, the newly-graduated hero is also given a host of extra weapons (selected using the triangle button), which allow him to take out ground-based hazards.



COMMENT

ALEX

I agree with Steve, the concept behind *Top Gun* is decent enough but the execution, like the variety between missions, is sadly lacking. Divided into two types – dogfight and ground attack – the sorties fast become repetitive, with only the FMV sequences holding any interest after a few hours of play. A fun shooter to begin with, but ultimately a shallow and disappointing licence based on an equally dire film.

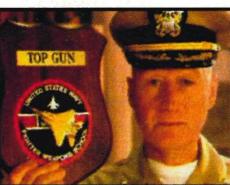


AS THE MISSIONS PROGRESS, THE ENEMY PLANES ARE PROGRESSIVE HARDER TO KILL, NEEDING MULTIPLE HITS.

DAMAGE LIMITATION

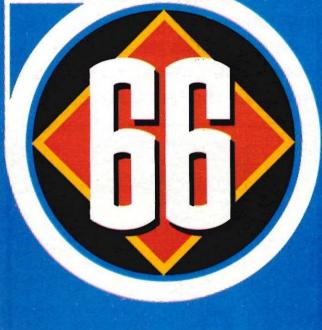


The player's F14 is equipped with unlimited ammo rounds, and a finite supply of air-to-air rockets and chaff decoys. These are activated using the facia buttons, with the rockets automatically locking on to a nearby target using a red cross hair sight to indicate the enemy has been targeted. The first wave of enemy drones are merely target fodder and novice pilots will find that a succession of well-timed rockets will take them out. However, as the missions become steadily harder the enemy starts to fight back, and perfectly-positioned mixtures of rocket and gun use is needed to send the enemy fighters sailing down to earth – complete with a congratulatory message from your unseen wingman ('Goose' if this is still aping the film). The enemy are also armed, though, and retaliate with similar supplies and a verbal warning from Goose leaves scant seconds to drop chaff or barrel roll out of danger. As the missions progress and more skill is needed to protect bombers or take out a designated objective, the F14 is likely to take more hits than usual, and a small indicator screen to the bottom-left of the play area indicates the plane's status. As the hits take effect, however, control over the plane falters and becomes sluggish to indicate engine or wing trouble, and it is only a matter of time before the view switches to outside the plane and it explodes into a cloud of what appears to be popcorn.



RATING

| | |
|-------------|----|
| GRAPHICS | 72 |
| ANIMATION | 65 |
| SOUND FX | 82 |
| MUSIC | 83 |
| LASTABILITY | 69 |
| PLAYABILITY | 63 |
| OVERALL | 66 |



GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
CONTINUES: N/A
SKILL LEVELS: 3

| | |
|---------|--------|
| RELEASE | JULY |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| BY | BMG |
| PLAYERS | 1-2 |

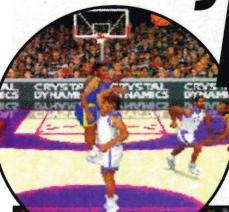


After a quiet couple of months, the PlayStation is again set to play host to another officially endorsed basketball simulation. With Sony, EA, and Konami all enjoying 'exclusive' NBA licences, Crystal Dynamics have opted to stick with two of the sports biggest names — namely hoop veteran Magic Johnson and his long-term partner Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

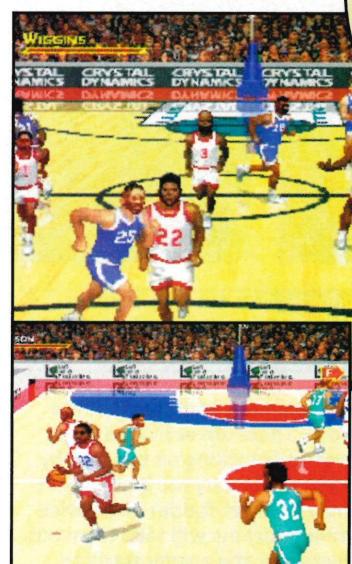
Magic and Kareem played together in an LA Lakers side which scooped five NBA championships and nine NBA MVPs during the pairs' heyday. And with a career spanning nearly twenty years, Magic Johnson is no stranger to video games based on his career, as a handful of C64 titles which date as far back as 1984 attempted to recreate his famed slam-dunking skills. Magic and Kareem's 32bit debut pits them and dozens of other recognisable NBA faces against each other in a series of tournaments and exhibition matches. In addition to the expected NBA teams, Crystal Dynamics have also included a series of 'All-Star' teams where the pair line up aside the players they consider to be the greatest in the game. Similarly, in keeping with the 'buddy' feel of putting the dynamic duo in the same game another old NBA stalwart, Van Earl Wright, has been called in to provide the commentary duties, thus recreating a role that has seen him follow both Magic and Kareem's careers across several years and hundreds of NBA games. With the PlayStation already playing host to 2D and 3D courts, more NBA licences than you'd think possible, and strange mixtures of realism and special power-ups, Crystal Dynamics are hoping that Kareem and his partner can weave their 'magic' to steal a victory in the last quarter.



Slam 'n' Jam '96



DETROIT
SACRAMENTO
1ST QUARTER



AS SEEN ON TV

Following *NBA Jam*'s horizontally-scrolling court and the full rotational 3D slam dunks witnessed in *Total NBA '96* and *NBA: In the Zone*, *Slam 'n' Jam '96* has taken a different route, opting for a view from behind one of the hoops. The main benefit of this view (and the panning camera which tracks the passes and shimmies around the court) is that Crystal Dynamics' graphic artists get to flex their muscles with huge sprites that genuinely resemble the players they are based on — with Kareem towering above the rest of the crew, and wowing the crowd with his supreme three-pointer and dunking abilities. The disadvantage of the floating camera, however, is that the player passing towards the hoop finds it harder to judge where their attackers are, and thus CPU-instigated interceptions prove annoyingly frequent.

COMMENT

GARY

Having watched everyone else in the office playing basketball games, I assumed there was something exciting and special about them, rather than just being a colourful version of netball, which all the girlies used to play at school. Maybe it's a fault of this one then, but I can't say I'm drawn to the game, despite the rave reviews of some PlayStation versions. In this case, the large sprites resemble beat 'em up contestants rather than basketball players, the camera views are awkward to say the least and actually getting the ball in the basket requires very little skill except in blocking the other team. Not a game I'm anxious to come back to, I'm afraid.

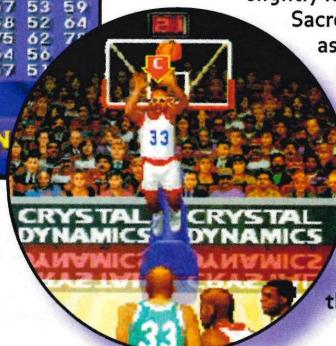
TEAM WORK

| SUBSTITUTE | Use ▲▼ To Select |
|----------------------|------------------|
| F 44 ERNEST DURRIN | 6'8" |
| F 52 ADRIAN WIGGINS | 6'6" |
| C 3 WAYNE MADDEN | 6'8" |
| G 1 PHILLIP SIMON | 6'1" |
| G 22 JACK DELANEY | 6'9" |
| G 30 ROD LAIRD | 6'5" |
| G 26 MARK PARISH | 6'1" |
| G/F 21 EARL HIGGINS | 6'8" |
| F 2 ANTHONY BRIDDE | 6'10" |
| F 25 DONALD JAMP | 6'8" |
| F 31 SIDNEY KLAESSEN | 6'7" |
| F 54 RON RANDOLPH | 6'9" |

CONTINUE

STARTERS - SACRAMEN

THE NBA LICENCE ALLOWS CRYSTAL DYNAMICS TO ADD REAL STATS TO THEIR BINARY TEAMS.

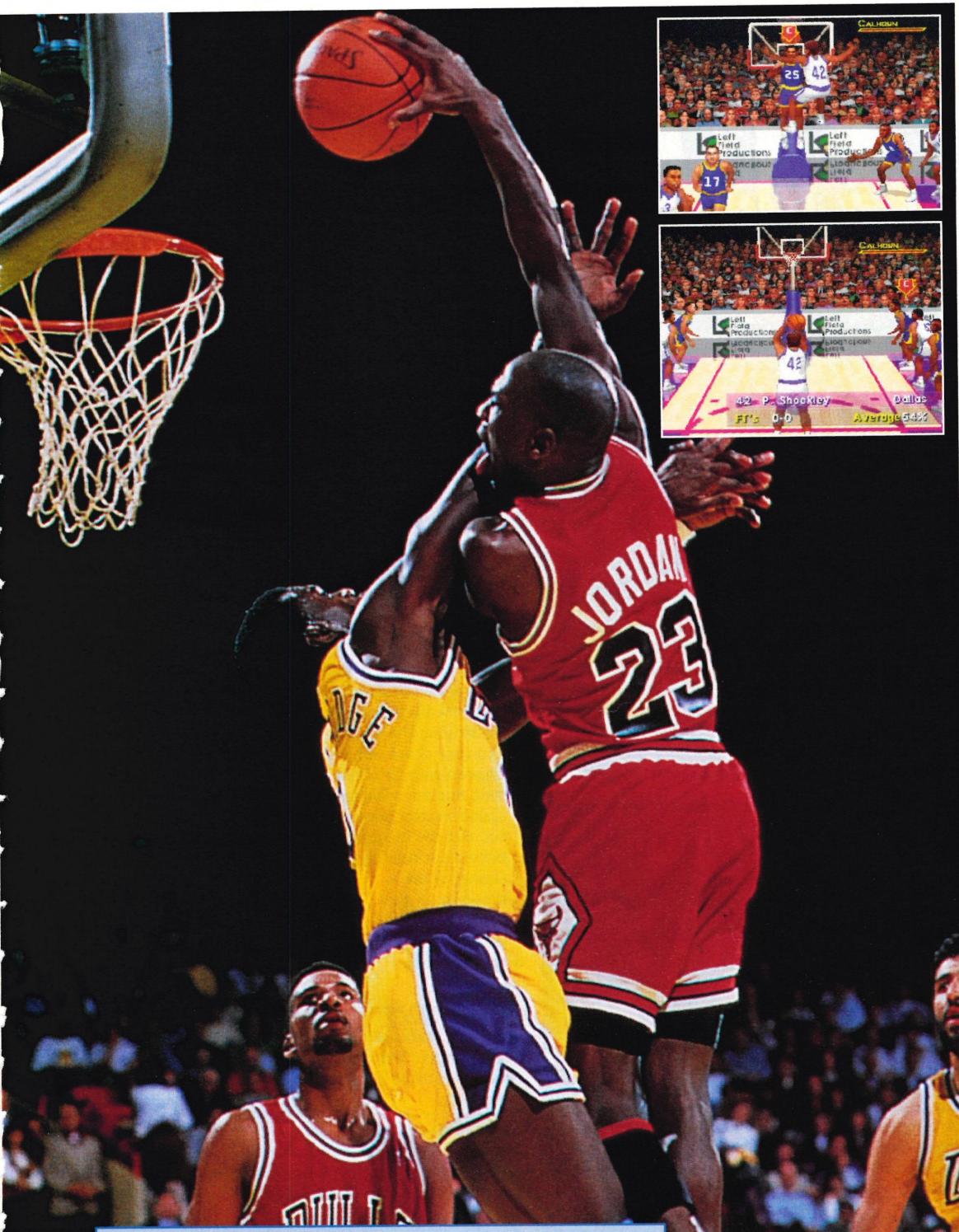


CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

With *Slam 'n' Jam '96* boasting another of the NBA's freely-distributed licences, the game features accurate statistics for all the players and teams it supports. Each player is ranked on their speed and shot abilities, while the teams range from the expected Dallas and Phoenix sides to the slightly less glamorous players from Sacramento and Cleveland. The assorted skills of the players is apparent on the court too,

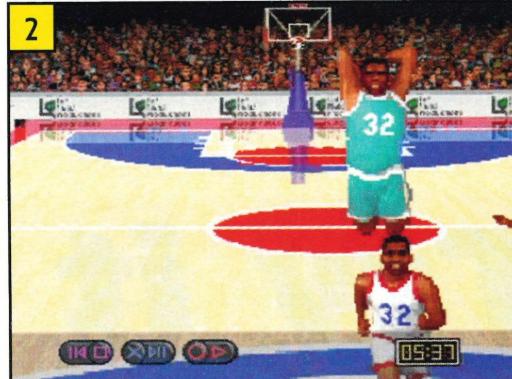
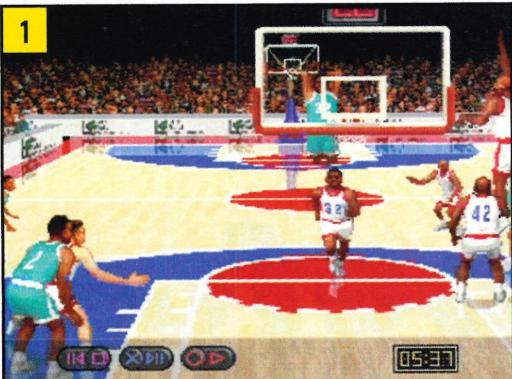
and those noted for their flamboyant playing skills — including main attraction Kareem Abdul-Jabbar — are all too keen to finish a rotating dunk with a quick swing from the hoop as the rest of the team regroups for the next chance of hoop glory.



RUN THAT BY ME AGAIN

In between rounds, *Slam 'n' Jam '96* offers clues as to special moves available within the game. Most notably, these include speed power ups and the assorted fancy dunks we have come to expect since *NBA Jam* hit the scene. For the most part, the combination of sprinting and a long jump to the

hoop will result in a stunning dunk that would make Shaquille O'Neal's greatest attempts look like those of a netball team's. Should the player pull off one such move they can be viewed over and over again from a number of angles via the game's nifty replay system.



COMMENT

STEVE

Slam 'n' Jam

'96's pro-

grammers

have taken a bold step in using the 'behind hoop' perspective, but sadly the initial thrill of a camera that follows the action is lost as it becomes apparent that the player passing towards the nearest hoop is at a severe disadvantage. Passing to unseen players proves extremely difficult, and the CPU is quick to step in and steal possession. Such a fundamental fault is a real pity, as for the most part *Slam 'n' Jam '96* is a nice enough game. Granted, it doesn't have the realism to rival *NBA: In The Zone* or *Total NBA*, but it is relatively fast paced and allows for some fancy dunking. One of the greatest faults with the game, however, is that it falls between the two established basketball game stools. It is neither totally realistic, and neither does it have the longevity-adding power-ups used in Acclaim's *NBA Jam* conversion. The look of the game and the ease of play makes it one for the younger would-be Larry Jordan — providing they are forgiving towards the irritating perspective problems, that is.

RATING

| | |
|-------------|----|
| GRAPHICS | 81 |
| ANIMATION | 75 |
| SOUND FX | 67 |
| MUSIC | 63 |
| LASTABILITY | 58 |
| PLAYABILITY | 72 |

OVERALL



GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY
CONTINUES: N/A
SKILL LEVELS: 1

| | |
|---------|--------|
| RELEASE | JULY |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| BY | EMPIRE |
| PLAYERS | 1 |



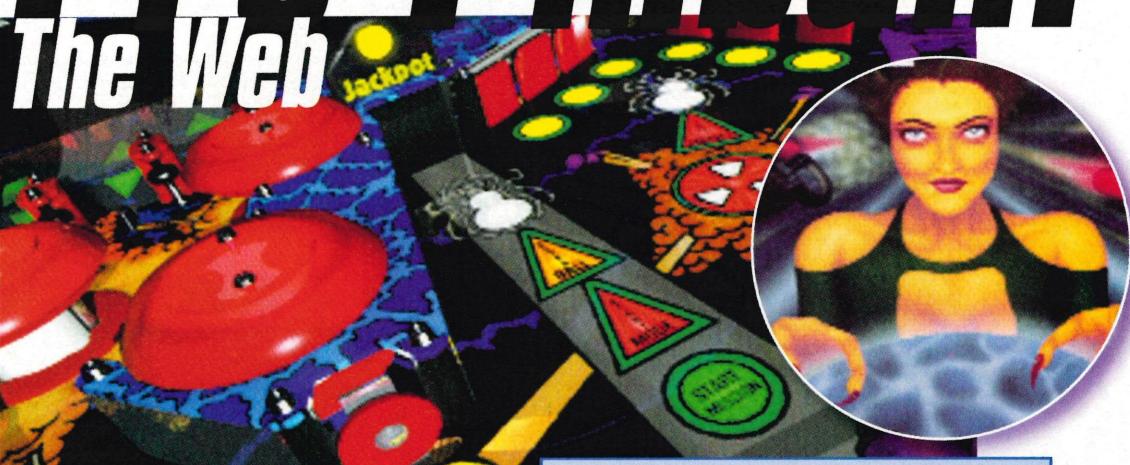
Spiders. Nasty, eight-legged monsters with hundreds of eyes and a plethora of dodgy films made about them. *Tarantula* (in which said arachnid grows to large proportions and terrorises America), Japanese gruesome Spigon stars in *Son of Godzilla* and *Destroy All Monsters* (and terrorises Tokyo) and, unsurprisingly, *Giant Spider Invasion* speaks for itself. Of course *Arachnophobia* is the one that had me gibbering in the darkest recesses of my local Ritzy a few years back, and for about the next couple of months generally. And that brings us, somewhat circuitously, around to Empire's new pinball game, *Pro Pinball: The Web*.

Tiny little white spiders are flecked all over the table top. The raised areas are decked in thin films of webbing and the whole thing looks dark and foreboding. This creepy effect is somewhat marred by the fact that the game is presided over by an Elvira wannabe (or indeed, a Mystic Meg wannabe) who seems to have nothing to do with spiders except that her facial contortion (expression would be too grand a word) suggests that she may well have sat on some lethal Funnel Web or Black Widow.

But the game itself? Well, what can one expect of a pinball table? You shoot the ball up, hit things, knock things over, score points, light up... er... lights in certain combinations and, sometimes, actually manage to keep three or four balls flying around at once.

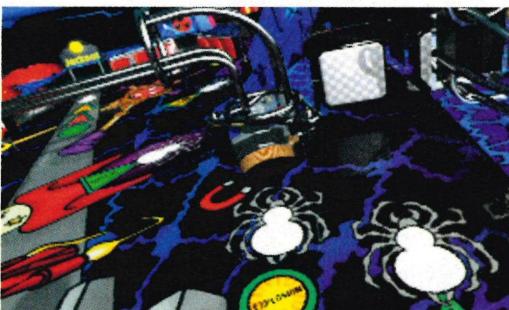
So what does *Pro Pinball: The Web* offer that raises it above the multi-tabled *True Pinball* or even the colourful *Extreme Pinball*? Let's take a look.

Pro Pinball: The Web



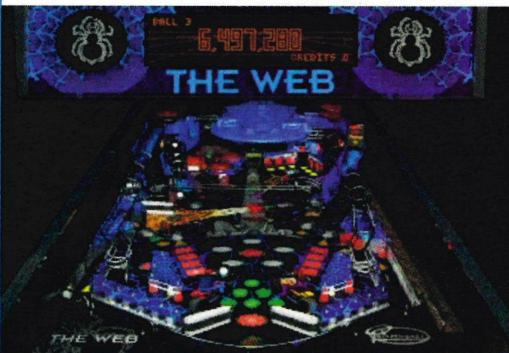
BEHIND THE SCREENS

Before you begin playing *Pro Pinball: The Web*, take a quick gander through the Slideshow, accessed via the Main Menu. This gives you a good look at all those bits of the table you can't easily see from the game vantage point, and you'll learn where the various hotspots and high scoring sections are as well as learning where the ramps, tunnels and jackpot holes are. Excellent stuff.



FRENZY

After you've attained certain victories, you suddenly find yourself in a Ball Frenzy. This basically consists of that good old adage of lots of balls at once. Up to four can appear on the table at any



MATRIX DATA BANK

The dot matrix screen at the rear of the table occasionally offers more than just score information and pretty pictures. For instance in the middle of one game it suddenly becomes a first-person version of *Asteroids* as you use the flippers to blast the huge rocks to powder, but avoid destroying the equally vast score balls. Hit those and your score diminishes. Others include the opportunity to knock bikers off their machines, stop nuclear reactors going critical and halting the space shuttle becoming a disaster. But my favourite brings out the Fred Dibner in me – blowing up skyscrapers and watching 'em topple. Cool.

**YOU DON'T NEED
MULTIPLE TABLES IN
PRO PINBALL: THE
WEB. THIS TABLE
HAS IT ALL!**



one time (you're given the opportunity to select two, three, four or a mystery number) and as each one drops off the table, so another automatically replaces it.



Try it before

Rent any latest release from just

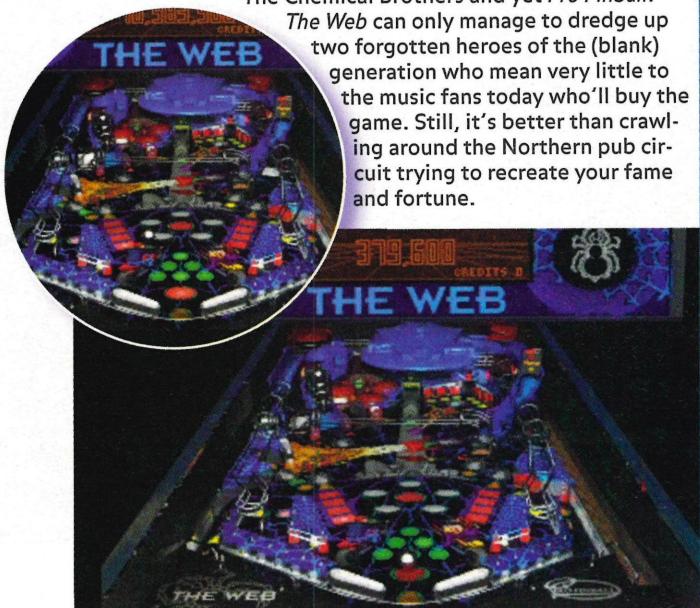
SCREEN SHOTS

Although there isn't the usual plethora of second rate table tops (a la *Extreme Pinball*) or the multi-choice-but-extremely-similar tables of *True Pinball*, *Pro Pinball: The Web* offers just the one. Covered with little spidery residues (hence the name), the table only really suffers from one fault: everything is the same tint of blue and when things are hotting up, it's quite difficult to tell where the ball is going – in front, over, or behind the various obstacles. That aside, the table can be viewed from three different angles – with or without the matrix screen – each one highly playable upon. During the course of the game there are a variety of different sub-games to play – accessed from the dot matrix screen at the top of the table – offering a more varied game than any of the table tops on the other games currently available.

MORE FILTHY LUCRE

You might have thought that the sight of the Sex Pistols (and their beer guts) in Finsbury Park last month was bizarre, but no more so than watching Stiff Little Fingers (Northern Irish punk band responsible for two fab late Seventies punk singles and bugger-all else) open for them. Led by one Jake Burns, he appears here supplying much of the music for *Pro Pinball: The Web*, alongside another of those '76-81-famous-people-now-gone-nowhere – Rick Buckler, drummer with Paul Weller's old "beat combo", the Jam. Funny old world – some games can afford to bring in top modern tune smiths such as Leftfield or

The Chemical Brothers and yet *Pro Pinball: The Web* can only manage to dredge up two forgotten heroes of the (blank) generation who mean very little to the music fans today who'll buy the game. Still, it's better than crawling around the Northern pub circuit trying to recreate your fame and fortune.



COMMENT

STEVE

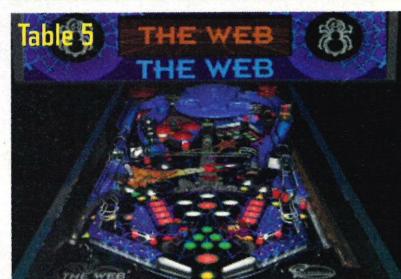
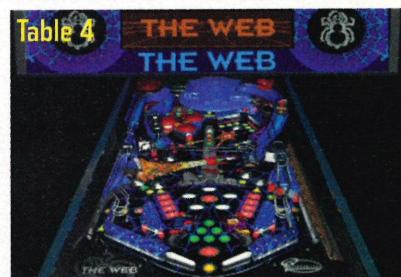
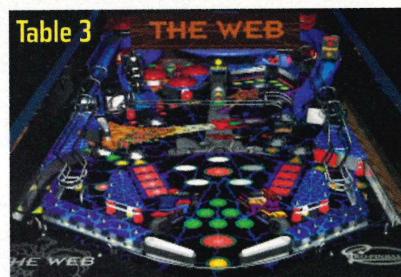
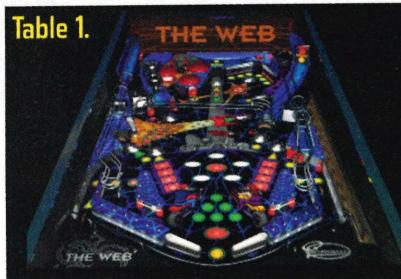
Although *Pro Pinball: The Web* is a one table game, the table is so accomplished and polished I feel very impressed indeed.

If you are a die-hard pinball fan, the intricacies of this table with its sub-games, realistic ball animations (the rendered ball even spins effectively), and true to life rebounds and tilts will be just up your alley. I'm dubious of *Pro Pinball: The Web*'s lasting appeal, as it's one thing to play a real table for a few quids' worth of entertainment and another to pay £45 for unlimited plays, but I've seen Gary play little else for a fortnight now, and if that cynical would-be Tommy thinks it's great, who am I to disagree?

COMMENT

GARY

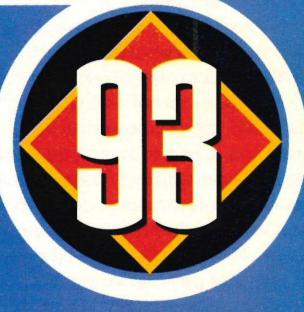
Okay, so it's yet another pinball game for the PlayStation. What makes this one so much better than the rest? Well, although just one table may seem a bit cheapskate, after the surfeit in *Extreme Pinball* and *True Pinball*, it's a damn good table. It has good, understandable sections, telling you the best way to maximise the points and a very useful dot matrix screen at the rear which, unusually, doesn't distract you at inopportune moments. Best of all, though, the ball movement is so fluid you quickly forget this is a computer generated ball, it handles just like the real thing. Although a console pinball game can never replace the real thing, playing *Pro Pinball: The Web* is so close, that I can't see this being bettered. A fabulous way to pass a trillion hours.



RATING

| | |
|-------------|----|
| GRAPHICS | 88 |
| ANIMATION | 96 |
| SOUND FX | 92 |
| MUSIC | 80 |
| LASTABILITY | 91 |
| PLAYABILITY | 94 |

OVERALL



you buy it.

£3.49 for three evenings

BLOCKBUSTER
VIDEO

GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
CONTINUES: MEMORY CARD
SKILL LEVELS: 1

| | |
|---------|---------|
| RELEASE | AUGUST |
| PRICE | £44.95 |
| BY | TELSTAR |
| PLAYERS | 1 |



round to Major, Bye Bye Tom, warbled Neil Tennant recently when the Pet Shop Boys integrated one spacey set of David Bowie lyrics into another, albeit rather randomly. *Starfighter 3000* is similarly a weird cocktail of different game ingredients. A sort of glorified *Air Combat* meets *Wing Commander*, as you pilot a little Predator Mk IV shuttle around both planetary surfaces and deep space, blowing large holes in the alien invaders' fleet and ground bases and generally being a darned nuisance to them.

Interspersed with mercifully short FMV sequences, *Starfighter 3000* is, unsurprisingly, set two thousand years in the future where military commanders still sound like twentieth century military commanders and aliens are attempting to rid the galaxy of the irritant known as mankind. Standard fare for PlayStation shoot 'em ups, really.

So what does *Starfighter 3000* offer for your fifty squids then? Well starting as a rookie pilot, you work your way up through the missions, each one more difficult and complicated than the next. Eventually you'll be called upon to be single-handedly responsible for the defeat of the extra-terrestrial foe and thus proclaimed a hero. Alas, there's no beautiful blonde in a skimpy white dress waiting to present you with your medals and offer you your heart's desire, but c'est vie dans la Starfighter Corps.

Nevertheless, what you have got is a first-person operated craft (although you are offered a second view - an external one which is damned tricky to operate via), more than ten levels to keep you going and a good supply of lasers, missiles and other assorted goodies to keep you well ready for attack. And it even tells you off if you decide to attack the guys on your side. No Fifth Columnists here, then!

Starfighter 3000

ROOKIE

To start off with, you have to go through the rigmarole of being the team's rookie pilot, learning to fly both near the ground and in the upper atmosphere, getting a handle on the way your craft... er... handles. Skim through the towers, dodge through the archways and, if you want to have some fun, blow everything to pieces and pick up the crystals. But ultimately, to access the subsequent levels, you need to dock with the Mothership - a tricky manoeuvre but for those familiar with the ways of, say, *Elite*, it ought to come very easily. But whatever you do, don't: A) crash into the Mothership (you both blow up) B) crash into one of the Mothership's support flyers (you both blow up) or C) get in the way of the Mothership's exhaust burners (you blow up but she's fine and dandy). Once completed, save this to your memory card and you're ready to move on to the next, somewhat more combat-based, levels.



LASERS WORK FINE, BUT IT'S FAR MORE FUN TO USE YOUR AIR TO GROUND MISSILES ON DOMES.



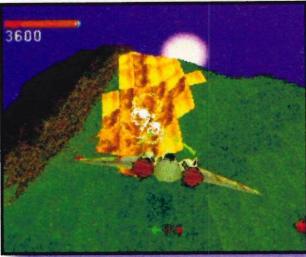
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TERRAFORMING

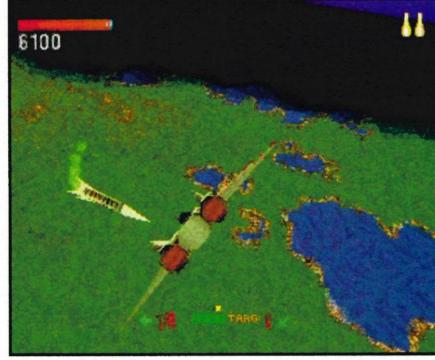
An ecologists' nightmare – your lasers are adept at blasting vast chunks of the countryside away, leaving new gullies and hillocks in their wake. To avoid other ships or Ground-to-Air Missiles, just blow the tops of mountains off, and fly through the resultant carnage. One piece of (pointless) japey in the rookie section is to destroy every stretch of roadway and piece of greenery you can. It doesn't help but, by jingo, it's jolly good fun, what?



MISSIONS

The missions vary from simple blowing up ammo bases, to protecting the Mothership from invasion. You have the option to attach other fighters in the squadron to your battle plans and, if using the Aggressive mode, you can really let rip. But be warned: enemy fighters are very fast,

very deadly and have a habit of appearing out of nowhere. Each mission is drawled to you by your Commander, detailing exactly what you need to do during each stage to ensure safety, survival, victory and transfer to the next level, and you can access a written version of this via the Strategy Map. The map itself is a vital piece of equipment, especially while getting the hang of the way in which your craft moves. Complete with grid references, it marks out your position, the location of the Mothership(s), other fighters and, most importantly, the enemy. It's a handy method of getting to learn where mountains and such like are, as it is a basic relief map and, best of all, it also shows you recent parachute drops, from where useful upgrades and supplies need to be collected. The parachutes need to be intercepted in mid-air if possible as a number of them explode if they contact the ground.



CRYSTAL CLEAR

There are a variety of power-ups to obtain, apart from the parachute drops. New weapons, more energy, better shields – they're all available with the right combination of special geometric shapes released by exploding buildings, pipelines or trees. You can hold four of these at any one time, and it quickly becomes a game of skill in selecting only the ones you need – a fifth power-up causes the eldest one in your inventory to vanish. So if it's a combination of red pyramids, yellow cubes, green stars or blue diamonds you need, keep an eye out.



UNLIKE, SAY, AGILE WARRIOR, IF YOU DON'T GET THE PICK-UPS QUICKLY, THEY'RE GONE FOR GOOD.

COMMENT

STEVE

This reminds me in ways of Microprose's *Top Gun: Fire at Will*. It's simplistic, nice enough to look at, and ultimately dull. However, while *Top Gun's* F14 turned with all the expected agility of an expensive plane, things are obviously tighter in the future as *Starfighter's* craft handles like a snail. Turning is a chore, and the weapon select system comes across as clunky and irritating – especially in the heat of battle. I love a good shoot 'em up, but the basic ingredients for the genre are speed, ease of use, and loads of targets. *Starfighter 3000* is weak in all these departments.

COMMENT

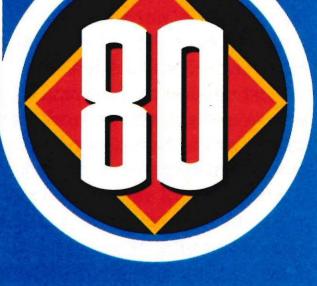
GARY

Variations on the aircraft sim-come-shoot 'em up abound on the PlayStation and, frankly, *Starfighter 3000* doesn't contain enough novelty to make it anything other than average. This is mainly because the controls for your fighter are a pain to master – any pleasure you have as a beginner to the game is lost as you battle to keep your craft flying logically. The slightest punch left or right sends the craft onto its wing tip, up or down and you're into a loop. By the time you've righted yourself, your coordination is shot to hell. You end up spending more time trying not to hit the hills or spiralling to the ground than is really necessary. Sorry, but for sheer good fun and satisfying gameplay, I'll go back to Virgin's *Agile Warrior* each and every time.

RATING

| | |
|-------------|----|
| GRAPHICS | 79 |
| ANIMATION | 84 |
| SOUND FX | 88 |
| MUSIC | 70 |
| LASTABILITY | 82 |
| PLAYABILITY | 79 |

OVERALL



you buy it.
£3.49 for three evenings

BLOCKBUSTER
VIDEO

GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY
CONTINUES: 3
SKILL LEVELS: 5

| | |
|---------|---------|
| RELEASE | OUT NOW |
| PRICE | IMPORT |
| BY | SONY |
| PLAYERS | 1-2 |

Motor Toon 2 Grand Prix 2

CAR-ACTERS



Let's not beat around the bush, the original *Motor Toon Grand Prix* was abysmal. Thankfully it never appeared in the UK, so Sony can start with a fresh slate with this, the super-humorous sequel. *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2* is bigger and better than its predecessor, with more tracks, more vehicles and, thankfully, more gameplay than ever before.

For the uninitiated *Motor Toon Grand Prix* is basically the PlayStation equivalent of *Wacky Races*, with the video game counterparts of Dick Dastardly, Penelope Pitstop and the Anthill Mob racing for supremacy in the league. Of course, to win the Motor Toons will resort to any dirty trick in the book, diving n their bag of tricks and pull out anything from an oil spill that slap on the track behind them, to a homing missile that can be fired at the car in front.

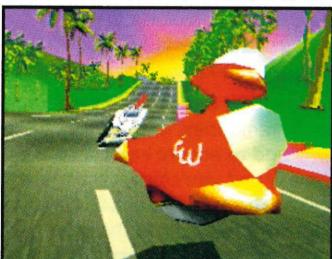
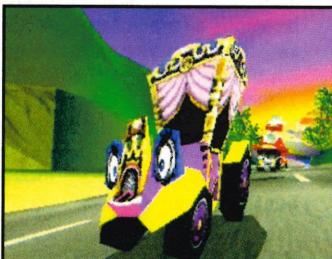
As well as entering the Motor Toon championship, challengers can opt to race on any single track or enter the time attack in which drivers can compete against 'ghost' cars recreating a fastest lap time. The game also has extensive video options which allow players to create and edit highlights of their favourite races, saving them onto memory card for posterity or just to gloat to their mates.

However, the oddest aspect of *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2* isn't the weird drivers, nor the obscure tracks or even the off-the-wall humour. It's the fact that the import version comes complete with two discs, the second used solely for the two-player battle mode. Although Sony has yet to confirm the UK version will include the same, you can almost hear the phone's ringing as gamers call their mates and challenge them to a quick three laps around the Haunted Castle.



Don't even ask to be Mansell or Hill, because in this Grand Prix weird is wonderful, whether it be the Penguin Brothers scooting around in their Penguin Mobile or Princess Jean, who drives what is basically a four-poster-bed on wheels! Initially there are five vehicles to choose from, from the fast-but-difficult-to-control (Raptor and Raptor's

Rocket Skimmer) to the slow-but-reliable (Bolbox's off-roader). However, win the Motor Toon Grand Prix and another three drivers become available, namely the bike-riding Vanity, Billy the Tough (who drives an old fashioned steam train) and Ching Tong Shang, a Chinese racer who sits behind the wheel of a super-fast Formula 1 car.



UNDER THE BONNET

There's much more to *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2* than first meets the eye. Winning the championship accesses a variety of hidden features, the first of which is three new characters to play as. Complete the season by winning each race in first position and another five tracks will appear, and while they're basically a mirror image of existing circuits, they are each given a new setting like snow and outer space. Also available to skilful players is a Motor Toon version of *Battlezone*, titled *Tank Combat*, and a 3D battleship game called *Submarine X*.



COMMENT

STEVE

Motor Toon Grand Prix 2 is a supremely playable racer of the *Mario Kart* school. While it suffers from clipping problems and some dodgy controls, *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2* is a remarkably play-able driving game, with varied courses and a good selection of vehicles. The wobbly nature of the cars assists cornering, and it is impossible to come away not feeling as if playability is back in vogue. I hope Sony's PAL code retains the second player CD, as it is more icing on a very tasty cake indeed.



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ROAD-ODENDRON

Although *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2* features almost a dozen tracks in its entirety, to win the racing season drivers must first master every straight, corner and curve of the initial five courses. On your marks...



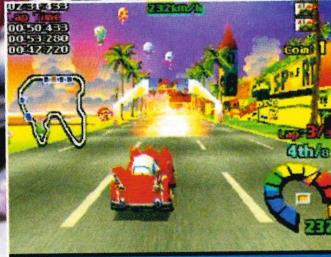
CRAZY COASTER

A difficult track to compete on as its surface is largely transparent, with winding circuits and is packed with tight corners and bumps that could, if you're not carefully, throw you from the course.



TOON VILLAGE

A simple circuit with few difficult corners. Keep the accelerator held down for most of the course, slowing down only for the tight hairpin and the long left hander leading up to the end of the circuit.



TOON ISLAND 2

The fastest course in the game, stay at full speed and cut corners by skimming across the grass wherever possible. Brake only for two corners, the right handers cut into the canyon walls.



GULLIVER HOUSE II

An course plagued by oversized rolling roulette balls and massive chess pieces, this rough ride takes you across a bumpy piano keyboard, over a back-gammon board and even through a gigantic cream cake!



HAUNTED CASTLE

Ignore the floating ghouls, zip into the dragon's mouth and around the haunted house, avoiding the boiling lava pools and driving past the castle battlements to avoid the never-ending fall on the other side.

COMMENT

ALEX

Motor Toon Grand Prix 2

is a vast

improvement over the original, and is a fun, playable racing game. Its cartoon style and whacky humour make the whole experience extremely enjoyable, while a good selection of cars, tracks and hidden extras ensures *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2*'s skeleton is fleshed out with enough meaty gameplay to keep the gamer hooked. A far cry from more serious racers like *WipeOut*, this is nevertheless an entertaining way to pass a few hours, especially in the two-player battle mode. The hidden sub-games, including *Tank Combat* and *Battleships*, are novel attractions and although little more than five-minute teasers, they make for a pleasant change from cartoon crashing. Without a doubt, this is one of the funniest games on the PlayStation.

RATING

GRAPHICS
ANIMATION

86

SOUND FX

80

MUSIC

83

LASTABILITY

84

PLAYABILITY

81

OVERALL

87



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GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: HARD
CONTINUES: PASSWORD
SKILL LEVELS: 3

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PLAYERS 1



You've just turned fourteen. Hair is beginning to sprout from the darkest recesses of

your body, you feel a strange sensation in your underpants when confronted by members of the opposite sex and spots have erupted uncontrollably across your face. Having ambled through primary school and skived most of the early years at high school, it's time to make a decision. What are you going to do with your life? The Careers Officer reckons the life of a library assistant would suit you perfectly but that's just too dull, you want to do something exciting. A quality control tester at Cadbury's sounds tempting, or maybe even a video games reviewer. But what about the National Services. Become a soldier, or possibly a marine? No? Well what about training to be a helicopter pilot.

Becoming a helicopter pilot is certainly an exciting prospect, but it's by no means an easy feat. The pilot needs to be able to fly a complex piece of machinery worth millions while at the same time dodging incoming flak and missile fire – but then the Careers Officer never said it would be simple. Thankfully there's an alternative, MicroProse's *Gunship*. It's almost as thrilling as the real thing and you don't need a PhD in mathematics to fly the bloody craft. Better still, armchair pilots get to play around with six of the world's most advanced gunships, flying across two theatres of duty against in either quick one-off missions or a full-blown campaign. Rookies can learn to fly the Apache within minutes, and successful pilots can progress through the ranks within a matter of hours. Now not even the RAF can offer that!



SMOKE TRAILS FROM A MISSILE.

Gunship

DEATH FROM ABOVE



CALLSIGN: WHISKY 1 - NIGHT SECTION

AH-64 APACHE

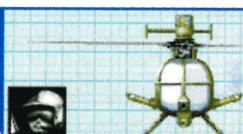
Without a doubt the finest helicopter gunship in the world, combining unparalleled versatility with ruggedness.



CALLSIGN: WHISKY 1 - DAY SECTION

AH-1W SUPER COBRA

Smaller and less armoured than its tougher Apache brother, the Cobra is nevertheless fast and extremely agile.



CALLSIGN: WHISKY 1 - DAY SECTION

AH-6 DEFENDER

More of a scout 'copter than a gunship, the Defender can still mount a selection of air-to-air and air-to-ground missile pods.



CALLSIGN: WHISKY 1 - NIGHT SECTION

OH-58D KIOWA

Extremely fast and agile, the Kiowa is primarily a scout ship and therefore only has the weapon mounts to carry the bare minimum essentials.



CALLSIGN: WHISKY 1 - NIGHT SECTION

UH-60K/L BLACKHAWK

A heavyweight but extremely slow helicopter, the Blackhawk is a well-armoured assault craft that's perfect for carrying troops into battle.



RH-64A COMANCHE

America's secret weapon. The Comanche overshadows even the Apache, and combines impressive weapons payload with surprising agility.

SIMULATION STIMULATION

You want a simple shoot 'em up? You ain't got it! *Gunship*'s arcade-style presentation is incredibly deceptive as there's more to this game than initially meets the eye. Offering an equal balance of simulation and outright action, virtual pilots must learn to fly the helicopter properly, flying low through rocky canyons rather than directly attacking the enemy. Hills and other terrain features must be used as protection, popping up and unleashing a hail of missiles before ducking behind cover again. There's also the flight dynamics to be taken into consideration. True, the helicopter is easy to fly at first but when the tail rotor has been damaged and the whole bird begins to swerve wildly, landing the damn thing is a bitch! Still, there's always the 'no-crashes' beginner mode if you feel like wimping out.



COMMENT

STEVE

MicroProse has a knack of cramming seemingly unfeasible game types into the

PlayStation. First it was X-Com, and now their hoary old C64/Amiga/ST/every-format-known-to-man classic, *Gunship*. Bearing in mind the PlayStation's minimal buttons, *Gunship* is a very complex and playable sim, with the missions varied in their content and flawless in their execution. Control of the Apache takes time, but practice reaps its rewards, and before long you'll be rivalling *Airwolf* in the derring do stakes. Strategy also plays a major part in the game, with the limited weapons requiring accuracy rather than gung-ho tactics. After *Top Gun* this is Microprose doing what they do best. Anyone with a penchant for tactical destruction give it a go.

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Gunship can either be played as a simplistic arcade game or in the more in-depth campaign mode. Rookie pilots, and indeed those just out for a hassle-free blast, should opt for the quick flight, a selection of four night and day-time missions where players must notch a high score by bagging enemy units. Campaign mission vary in both location and objectives, pilots choosing either the Persian Gulf or Central Europe as their tour of duty. The missions then vary from single combat runs, which can be anything from search and rescue missions to recon sorties, to a full blown campaign in which the player is immersed in a series of linked missions that enables the pilot to progress gradually through the ranks.



ORDNANCE SURVEY

Okay, you've picked your 'copter but what about its payload? The best weapon to strap to the gunship depend very much on the forthcoming mission, whether the target is a slow-moving armoured vehicles or a agile enemy helicopter. Therefore the mission brief should be read carefully and the payload adjusted accordingly. If the primary target is a building then stock up on bombs, and don't forget a handful of Sidewinder or Stinger missiles for incoming air threats. Thankfully the six gunships are extremely versatile and can carry many weapons – here is just a selection of the ordnance on offer.

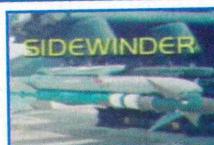
AIM-92 STINGER

The Stinger is a heat-seeking, air-to-air missile that's perfect for tracking low-flying threats such as enemy helicopters. It has a range of six kilometres.



AIM-9R SIDEWINDER

The Sidewinder is a more deadly cousin of the Stinger, with a range of eight kilometres and the ability to lock onto its target from any angle.



AGM-122 SIDEARM

An anti-radiation missile that tracks radar signals rather than heat streams, the Sidearm has an impressive range of 15 kilometres.



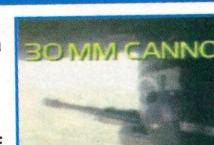
AGM-114A HELLFIRE

A heavyweight air-to-ground missile, the laser-guided Hellfire can take out armoured threats such as tanks from up to six kilometres away.



M230 30mm CANNON

Perfect for strafing infantry or simply used as a last resort, the chain gun carries 1200 rounds of ammunition but has a range of just one and a half kilometres.



HYDRA 70 M261

Pods containing either 14 or 38 unguided Hydra rockets can be strapped to the wings of the gunship, and are used to eliminate lightly armoured enemies up to three kilometres away.



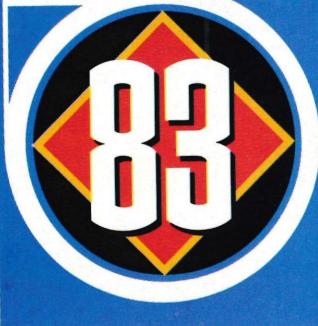
COMMENT

ALEX

Gunship is a difficult game to get into because it's more of a serious simulation than a straightforward blast. Although the quick fight mode offers instant pick-up-and-play action, if you don't fly the helicopter 'authentically' the chances of success are minimal. Therefore it's not a game that's immediately rewarding, the player gets more out of gunship the more they play it. Sure, the one-off missions are fun but it's only when you get involved with a full campaign that gunship becomes totally absorbing. As for the presentation, *Gunship*'s most unique feature is the realistic terrain that scattered with hills and canyons, allowing pilots to take advantage of the protection the landscape has to offer. It's this level of detail that makes *Gunship* a joy to behold, but it also makes the game more inaccessible. If you're willing to persevere through the frustrating initial levels then *Gunship* offers a challenging, structured blast. If, on the other hand, you prefer your action simple and hassle-free then I'm afraid this doesn't quite fit the bill.

RATING

| | |
|-------------|----|
| GRAPHICS | 84 |
| ANIMATION | 73 |
| SOUND FX | 75 |
| MUSIC | 63 |
| LASTABILITY | 85 |
| PLAYABILITY | 81 |
| OVERALL | 83 |



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Mystery Word Grid

| | | | | | |
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**M
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WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
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| BREAKZ | PUNCHS | SPRAYC | TURBOV |
| STOMPT | STANDR | PRESSE | DREAMO |
| CRUSH.....I | SCOREH | SLANTL | CHASE.....P |

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| Magic Carpet | £34.99 | Total NBA | £37.99 |
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Videos

comics books

As the worlds of gaming and merchandise ranging from books, comics, videos and CDs merge ever closer, this issue of *PlayStation Plus* sees the start of a new feature, updating you on items of associated merchandise currently available that we believe will be of interest to PlayStation gamers everywhere.

BOOKS

WING COMMANDER: HEART OF THE TIGER

By William R Forstchen & Andrew Keith

PRICE: £4.75

RELEASED BY: Baen
RATING: ★★

Mark Hamill aside, the Wing Commander game has always had a kind of sub-Star Wars feel to it, and the books inspired by the game are no different. Indeed, substitute any of the characters herein for those in the Star Wars novels and you'd have a straight-forward little runaround about good versus evil. And therein really lies the problem. The books are written with a lightness of touch so evident, that you feel as if the pages are going to float away. The story of *Heart of the Tiger* (someone should tell the authors that Kilrathi have claws, by the way, not talons) is somewhat light and fluffy and rather dreary. It starts so well, but spends so much time trying to put character into protagonists who don't need depth that, ultimately, the book fails for trying to be too good. Which is really a sort of backhanded compliment, I suppose. (GR)

DOOM: ENDGAME

By Dafydd ab Hugh & Brad Linaweaver

PRICE: £4.50
RELEASED BY: Pocket
RATING: ★★

The idea of books based upon *Doom* was so inevitable that it would have been amazing not to find them. And with a licence like that, well, anything with the *Doom* logo on it has to be a licence to print money. Good for Pocket Books then, rather go down the avenue old cheap 'n' nasty, their books, although not likely to win Pulitzers, are at least a competent,

enjoyable set of romps. *Endgame* is the latest in the series, following Fly and Arlene who head off to the Demons' home planet to try and destroy once and for all, the aliens who have decimated half a solar system. It's straightforward, exciting and enthralling, like a good pulp novel ought to be. If anyone wants to recapture those cheap and cheerful pulp fantasy stories of yesteryear, this is the sort of thing to go for. (GR)

GRAPHIC NOVELS

VENOM: CARNAGE UNLEASHED

By Larry Hama & Andrew Wildeman

PRICE: £8.99
RELEASED BY: Boxtree
RATING: ★★★

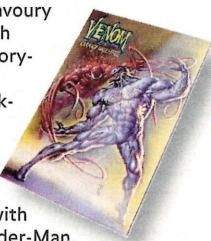
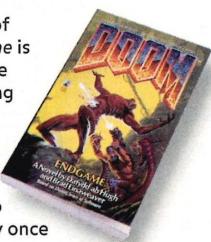
Knockout writing from Hama provides two of Marvel's less savoury anti-heroes with quite a good storyline involving Carnage's breakout from the institute where he was placed after his last battle with Venom and Spider-Man. Carnage, in his human alter ego of Cletus Kasady, is connected to the Internet, watching as computer games featuring his battles are downloaded and has found a way to transmit himself, via the living symbiotic skin that is Carnage, via the Net back into the outside world. Venom, or rather his human host Eddie Brock, is drawn back to New York in an effort to stop his old adversary. In typical Venom/Carnage style, the body count grows steadily higher and, despite a rather pointless subplot involving Brock and a naive teenager called Kirstin, the story cracks along nicely, the relentless comic-book gore frequently so over-the-top and unreal, you can do little but snigger at it all. (GR)

X-MEN: ALTERNATE VISIONS

By various writers & artists

PRICE: £9.99
RELEASED BY: Boxtree
RATING: ★★★★

Although not aimed at those unfamil-



iar with the adventures of the X-Men, this collection of *What If...* tales takes an interesting sideways look at various major events in the group's past. *What if Stryfe had killed the X-Men?* ends in a reasonable straight-forward massacre, whereas *What if Wolverine had led Alpha Flight?* is a far more satisfying read. Whilst wondering what would have happened if Storm had stayed a thief or if Rogue possessed the power Thor are far more enjoyable than any straight-forward slug-fest, it is ironic the story in which Wolverine battles a different Weapon X that is the collection's highlight. The story is both a neat alternative to the Alpha Flight adventure which opens the collection, as well as being a true *What If...*, one which actually takes a character back to his origins. (GR)

CDs

RIDGE RACER (Ray Keith Mixes)/TEKKEN

PRICE: £3.99/£12.99
RELEASED BY: JVC/NAMCO
RATING: ★/★★

Why? I mean, what really is the point of putting techno tracks like this out on a CD? Who is going to buy them? They possess neither the commercial needs of established artists, nor the street cred to get played in clubs and they have the stamp of "novelty" releases rather than serious Kiss FM-style trax. The *Ridge Racer* mixes are tedious and under-produced, so that if they were played in a club, it would be time to head for the bar, while a whole album of the *Tekken* music seems rather repetitious and pointless. Trying to nudge into a market dominated by high-class dance classics, and dragged down by less than mediocre crap, is pointless and whether by accident or design, both these offerings fall heavily into the latter category. Sure, you might play the *Ridge Racer* game at the Ministry of Sound but you sure as hell don't want to dance to it. (GR)

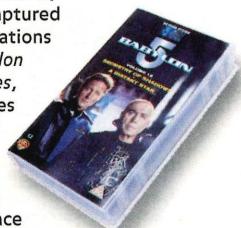


VIDEOS

BABYLON 5 – VOL 12

PRICE: £10.99
RELEASED BY: Beyond Vision
RATING: ★★★★

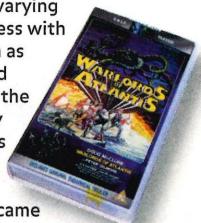
Good as a lot of American telly science-fiction is, very little has captured people's imaginations as much as *Babylon 5*. Like *The X-Files*, the show requires the watching of every episode to get a grip on the on-going sub-plots that lace each individual fifty-minute episode. The two episodes here, from early on in the second season, are nothing short of excellent. Both offering more than tantalising glimpses into the show's running themes, *Geometry of Shadows* contains a brilliant scene between the fluffy Londo and alien-of-the-week Michael Ansara ("I hear the cries of your people, Londo." "My followers?" "No, your victims.") while *A Distant Star* teaches us more about the mysterious Shadows and their groovy ships. The best way to spend your £11.00 video-allotted-cash per month without a doubt. (GR)



WARLORDS OF ATLANTIS

PRICE: £9.99
RELEASED BY: Beyond Vision
RATING: ★★★

Where would the popular movie world have been without the late Doug McClure. After varying degrees of success with telly shows such as *The Virginian* and *Barbary Coast* in the Sixties and early Seventies, it was with his four Kevin Conner films that he became a hero of UK/US schmuck movies – *The Land that Time Forgot* and its imaginatively named sequel *The People that Time Forgot* (based on Tarzan creator E R Burroughs' *Pelucdar* novels), as well as the seminal *At the Earth's Core*, alongside Peter Cushing re-creating his fussy Dr Who character in all but name. Finally, there was *Warlords of Atlantis*, a film that clearly had an idea scribbled on the back of a fag packet in a pub and someone had to then add another ninety minutes to make all the effects worth spending the cash on. Nowhere near as endearingly awful as *The Land...* or ...*Earth's Core*, but infinitely better than *The People...*, no fan of quality crap should be without this. (GR)



THE NEW OUTER LIMITS – VOL 3

PRICE: £10.99
RELEASED BY: Beyond Vision
RATING: ★★

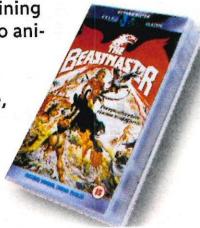
The New Outer Limits relies on stars rather than plots to surprise the viewer in these two forty-minute episodes – which makes the 'we control your television for the next hour' intro rather superfluous. *Caught in the Act* concerns a girl, possessed by an alien force, who becomes a predatory vamp out to satiate her craving for sex.

However far from just bedding the men she meets, she draws them into her body as a number are needed so the alien can create a host body. Hannah's struggle with her vampirishness is well handled, but the ending lets the episode down badly. *The Voyage Home* features astronauts returning from Mars. There, contact was made with something, and one of the crew morphs into a reptilian creature. The alien is jettisoned, but another has also been taken over. There's still no disguising that the old, black and white series did it ten times better... (SM)

THE BEASTMASTER

PRICE: £9.99
RELEASED BY: Terror Vision
RATING: ★★

Never considered a true star (his acting bordered on the mahogany at times), Marc Singer nevertheless carries this film about a young prince raised by peasants and gaining the gift to talk to animals. A sort of Conan meets Doctor Doolittle, Singer tries manfully to cope with a daft script



and some animals he doesn't always look comfortable around. Glamour is supplied by former *Charlie's Angel* and Bond-girl Tanya Roberts while Rip Torn turns in a great melodramatic (oh, all right, well over-the-top) villain. The show ought to be stolen by Singer and Roberts, but frankly the talking ferrets convey more pathos, substance and emotion. It's one of those films that has to be seen, not because it's a classic, but as it's so awful. Don't kill for it but you should see it once in your lifetime. (GR)

DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE

PRICE: £10.99
RELEASED BY: Terror Vision
RATING: ★★

Think about those early black and white horror flicks and you're immediately swamped by images of Karloff's Frankenstein monster or Lugosi hammering it up as Dracula. Even Chaney's Wolfman and Phantom of the Opera spring to mind. But Frederic March's Jekyll and Hyde? Nah, thought not. Yet this really is a classic, and sadly forgotten, movie. Joining the above classic creations in their classic films, this version of the Stevenson classic story of alter egos and man's dark side opts for sex and violence over psychological drama but it is superb. Sit down on Saturday night with some cans of brew and watch this with your mates. You'll either be amazed by the audacity of what they could do in the Thirties or too pissed to care. And it'll entertain you for a couple of hours. (GR)

WIN WIN WIN

BABYLON 5

To help celebrate the arrival of twelfth *Babylon 5* tape, Beyond Vision have given us five copies of this latest tape in this excellent series to give away. The first five names out of the hat on September 1st will win a tape. Simple, eh? All you need to tell us on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope is who Bruce Boxleitner plays in the show. Is it:

- A) Commander John Sinclair
B) Commander John Sisko
or
C) Commander John Sheridan

Send your postcard to BAB5 at the PlayStation Plus editorial address (see Page 114), to arrive before September 1st 1996.

THE BEASTMASTER

Growl, snarl, yap! Yap? Oh well, we can't understand what animals say either, but you could learn by following in the footsteps of the Beastmaster himself. Just watch what he does in the movie and it's so simple! Now, if you want the chance to learn, we have five copies of *The Beastmaster* to give away, courtesy of Beyond Vision, if you can tell us on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope which US fantasy series, *The*

Beastmaster actor Marc Singer went on to star in. Was it

- A) V
B) *Salvage One*
or
C) *Alien Nation*

Send your postcard to GRRR at the PlayStation Plus editorial address (see Page 114), to arrive before September 1st 1996.

WORLD OF ATLANTIS

Feel like fighting giant octopuses? Rescuing damsels in distress? Floating on dodgy rafts over waterfalls? If so, here's your chance to see one of the late Doug McClure's greatest moments in the Seventies classic, *Warlords of Atlantis*. We have five copies to give away, courtesy of – guess who – yup, those fine folk at Beyond Vision! All you need to write down on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope is which alien race of monsters the British writer of *Warlords of Atlantis*, Brian Hayles, is best remembered for creating.

- A) The Klingons in *Star Trek*
B) The Ice Warriors in *Doctor Who*
or
C) The Shadows in *Babylon 5*

Send your postcard to WET WONDER at the PlayStation Plus editorial address (see Page 114), to arrive before September 1st 1996.

A
G O O D
D A Y
at the
O F F I C E





Glossary

- T Towards
- D Down
- A Away
- U Up
- DT Down Towards
- UT Up Towards
- UA Up Away
- DA Down Away

FO FAI

Secret moves

Super Power Sphere: D, DT, T, A, DA, D, DT, A, ■+●.

Lingering Fart: A, UA, U, UT, T, ■+●.

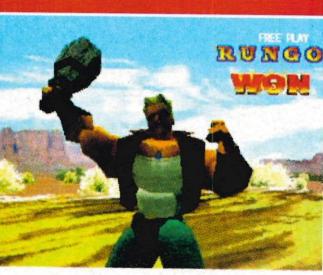
Giant Fart: ●, ■, X, ▲+T.

Desperation move
Projectile Energy Sphere: T, A, DA, D, DT, T, A, ▲.

RUNGO IRON

Secret move
Flaming Kick Fury: U, UA, A, DA, D, DT, T, ●.

Desperation move Hail Storm: A, DA, D, DT, T, DT, D, DA, A, ▲.



TOPS Plus

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 2

Following on from the cheats printed in Issue 9 allowing players to access various hidden characters, here is a list of the various special attacks and desperation moves for each fighter.

EIJI SHINJO

Secret move
Double Fireball Swing: T, D, DT, T, D, DT, ▲.Desperation move
Charging Sword Fury: T, DT, D, DA, A, DA, D, DT, T, ▲.

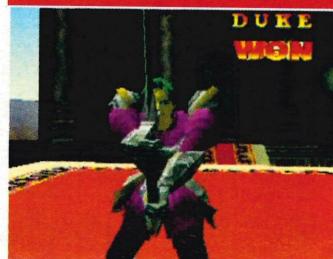
KAYIN AMOH

Secret move
Triple Flip Kick: T, DT, D, DA, A, DA, A, T, A, ●.Desperation move
Charging Sword Fury: T, DT, D, DA, A, DA, D, DT, T, ▲.

SOFIA

Secret move
Flaming Rattlesnake: T, DT, D, A, DA, A, T, A, ▲.Desperation move
Call Me Queen: T, A, T, A, ▲.

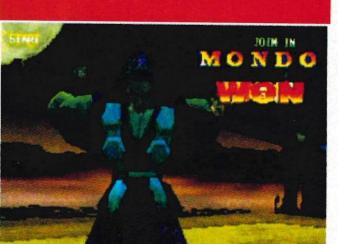
DUKE B RAMBERT

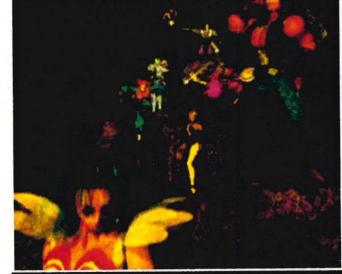
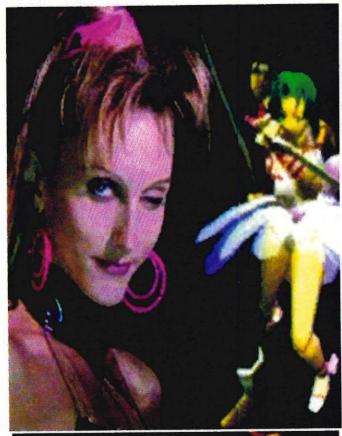
Secret move
Excalibur Swipe: T, DT, D, DA, A, T, D, DT, ▲.Desperation moves
Flaming Swing Lunge: DA, D, DT, T, A, ▲.

ELLIS

Secret move
Diving Knife Combo: DT, D, DA, D, DT, A, T, ▲.Desperation move
French Kiss Combo: T, A, T, A, ▲.

MONDO

Secret move
Flaming Rod: T, UT, U, UA, A, T, DT, D, ●.Desperation move
Aerial Fireball Hail: D, DT, T, D, DT, T, A, ▲.

**MASTER**

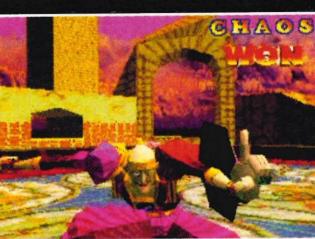
Secret move
Sword Fury: T, DT, D, DA, A, T, DT, D, DA, A, ■ or ▲.

Desperation move
Flash Shield: A, DA, D, DT, T, A, DA, D, DT, T, ▲.

CHAOS

Secret moves
Flaming Palm Strike: T, DT, D, DA, A, T, A, T, ■+●.
Flaming Ground Strike: T, DT, D, DA, A, D, DF, T, ■+●.
Flame Wall: T, DT, D, DA, A, DA, D, DT, ■+●.
Flaming Sickle Uppercut: T, DT, D, DA, A, T, D, DT, ■+●.
Flaming Shield Swipe: T, DT, D, DA, A, D, DA, ■+●.

Desperation move
Charging Flame Sickle: A, DA, D, DT, T, D, DA, A, ▲.

**VERMILLION**

Desperation move
Artillery Blitz: A, DA, D, DT, T, A, DA, D, DT, T, ▲.

TRACY

Secret moves
Right To Remain Silent: T, DT, D, DA, A, DA, A, T, A, ●.
Elbow Smash: A, T, T, ■+X.

Desperation move
Police Brutality: T, A, T, A, ▲.

**URANUS**

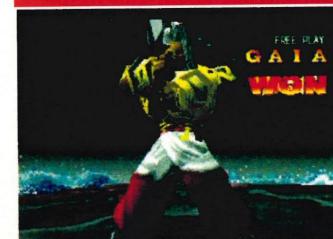
Secret moves
Flame Ball: A, DA, D, DT, T, A, DA, D, DT, T, ●.
Low Flaming Lunge: T, DT, D, DA, A, ■ or ▲.

Desperation move
Heavenly Arrow: A, DA, D, DT, T, A, DA, D, DT, T, ▲.

GAIA

Secret moves
Mystic Quad Sword Strike: U, UA, A, DA, D, DT, T, ▲.
Mystic Face Step: U, UA, A, DA, D, DT, T, ●.

Desperation move
Flaming Mystic Palm: T, DT, D, DA, A, DA, D, DT, T, ▲.

**SHO**

Secret moves
Plasma Vortex: T, DT, D, DA, A, DA, A, T, ●.
Suicide Impale: A, DA, D, DT, T, DT, D, DA, A, ■+X.

Desperation move
Charging Sword: T, DT, D, DA, A, DA, D, DT, T, ▲.

SIT BACK
and enjoy
YOUR FLIGHT



Wing Commander III

MISSION 1

ROUTINE PATROL

Wingman: Hobbes

Having spoken to Rachel, fly the mission. Upon your return to flight control, then ride the elevator to the living area. Talk to Rollins in the lift, choosing the top line of questioning. Speak to Vaquero and Vagabond in the recreation room, again select the top dialogue line for both. Look at the killboard near the bar before heading into the berths. Chat to Cobra before opening your locker. Go to the bridge and talk to Maniac, then walking into the gunnery room before returning to the bridge. Take the elevator down to flight control and enter the briefing room, ready for Mission 2.

MISSION 2

ROUTINE PATROL

Wingman: Maniac

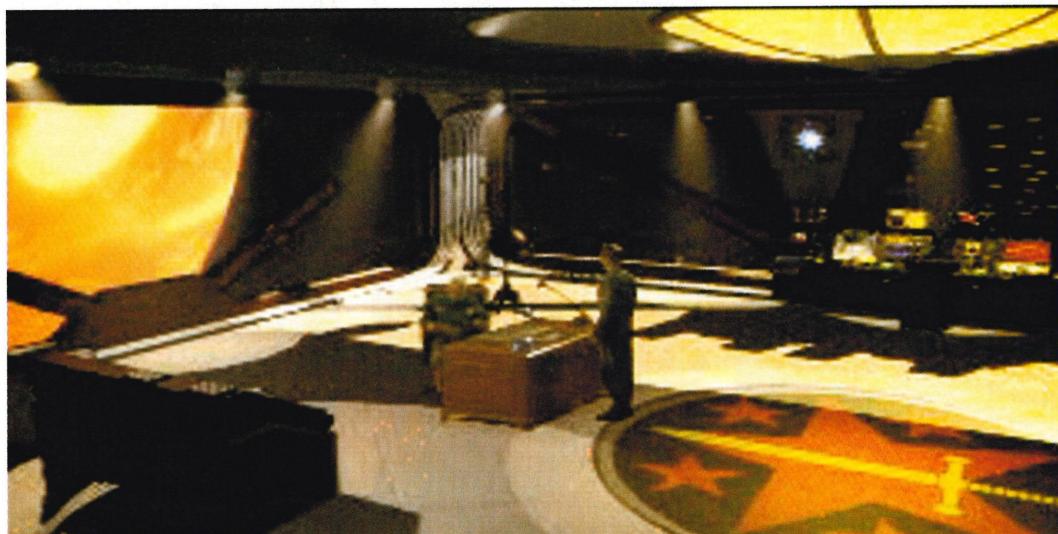
Speak to Rachel before embarking on the mission. Having completed all the objectives, land and head straight to the briefing room for the next mission.

MISSION 3

ESCORT TRANSPORT

Wingman: Maniac

After determining the load of your craft with Rachel, fly the mission before returning to flight control. Zip up to the living area and view the kill board, then sidle up to Rachel at the bar. Into the berths, once again look inside the locker, then take the elevator to the bridge and walk through to gunner control. When talking to Flint reply with the top dialogue line, then return to the bridge and head back to flight control.



Okay Wing Commander, you may have mastered flying the Excalibur through cluttered asteroid fields but have you got to grips with Colonel Blair's personal life? If not, here's a complete guide of the do's and don't aboard the good ship TCS Victory.

MISSION 4

ESCORT TRANSPORT

Wingman: Flint

During the mission, before you jump to the first waypoint make sure you fly close to the transport ship otherwise it won't follow your ship. With yet another mission under your belt, watch the TCS Victory jump to the Tamayo system, then meet Flash on the flight deck. Talk to him



using the bottom dialogue line and he'll reveal that he's testing the new prototype fighter, the Excalibur. Take the lift to the bridge and at the gunnery control, talk to Manic and Flint using the top dialogue line. Return to the bridge to talk to Captain Eisen and Hobbes. Shortly an alarm sounds, alerting the nearby presence of the Kilrathi fighters. All fighters are scrambled for the battle, and having flown return to the Victory and go to the berths and wake up Flash. Go to the recreation room and talk to Rachel, who is standing at the bar. After a short conversation, agree to fly the Excalibur when you get the chance. Return to the briefing room for the next sortie.

MISSION 5

KILRATHI ATTACK

Wingman: Maniac

When choosing your ship opt for the all-new Excalibur. Upon your return Flash will lose his temper and challenge you to a duel on the simulator – accept, then head over to flight control. Talk to captain Eisen before defeating Flash in the simulator, showering his ship with missiles. After watching the cutscene speak to Flash, then scoot over to the berths where you'll find Cobra. Talk to her using the top dialogue line, then sit-in on the next mission briefing.

MISSION 6

KILRATHI RAIDERS

Wingman: Maniac

Fly the mission then return to the Victory. Speak to Vagabond using the bottom dialogue line option and then talk to Hobbes, who can be found in the gunnery control centre. Attend the next mission briefing...



MISSION 7

DESTROY BIO-WEAPON

Wingman: Maniac

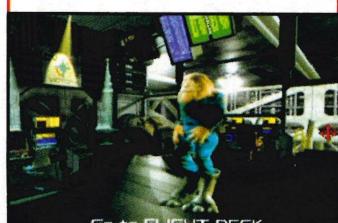
The aim of this mission is to destroy the bio-warheads before they reach Locana IV. After what is hopefully a successful mission, grab Flint and grill her for disobeying her orders. After watching the cutscene, take the lift to the bridge, talking to Officer Rollins on the way up. At the top speak to Captain Eisen, then leave the bridge for the next combat run.

MISSION 8

GUARD JUMP POINTS

Wingman: Flash

This is a relatively straightforward mission, with Blair and Flash defending against a swarm of incoming Kilrathi fighters. Having dispensed with the pesky felines, tap in the next waypoint and return home. Back aboard the TCS Victory, enter the briefing room and immediately take off on the following mission.



Go to FLIGHT DECK.

MISSION 9**ESCORT TRANSPORTS****Wingman: Flint**

In order to successfully complete this mission you need to save at least two transport ships. Having done so, return to the ship and head towards the gunnery control, where you should talk to Flint. Then return to the briefing room.

MISSION 10**ESCORT WEAPON CONVEY****Wingman: Flash**

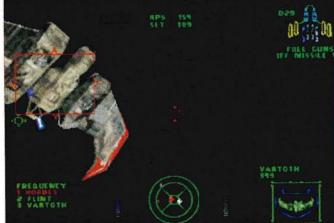
Having completed the mission the Victory warps in Kilrathi space. The battle is beginning to heat up, both between the Terrans and the Kilrathi as well as on the TCS Victory. Talk to Cobra at flight control, replying with the top dialogue option. In the living area, speak to Vagabond with the top reply then chat to Rollins, who can be found working on the bridge. Finally take the elevator to the next mission briefing.

MISSION 11**DESTROY KILRATHI GARRISON****Wingman: Vaquero**

Having destroyed the Kilrathi garrison located deep within the nebula, select the top dialogue line when speaking to Vaquero in the berths. In gunnery control confront Officer Hobbes, then prepare to fly the next sortie.

MISSION 12**KILRATHI NEBULA ATTACK****Wingman: Maniac**

Use your wingmen to help defeat the swarm of Kilrathi fighters, before returning to the Victory and speaking to Flint. Having done so, attend the following mission briefing.

**MISSION 13****ESCORT CARRIER****Wingman: Maniac**

Jump to the Calaban system, fly the simple escort mission then talk to Cobra and Hobbes on the flight deck. Seconds later there's a message from Prince Thrakhath, warning of the imminent doom of the entire human race. Forget the big cat's growls, and talk to Flash in the berths before returning to the fray.

MISSION 14**LEAVING ARIEL SYSTEM****Wingman: Flint**

A simple mission. Complete, return to the Victory and immediately embark on the next run.

**MISSION 15****KILRATHI ATTACK****Wingman: Hobbes**

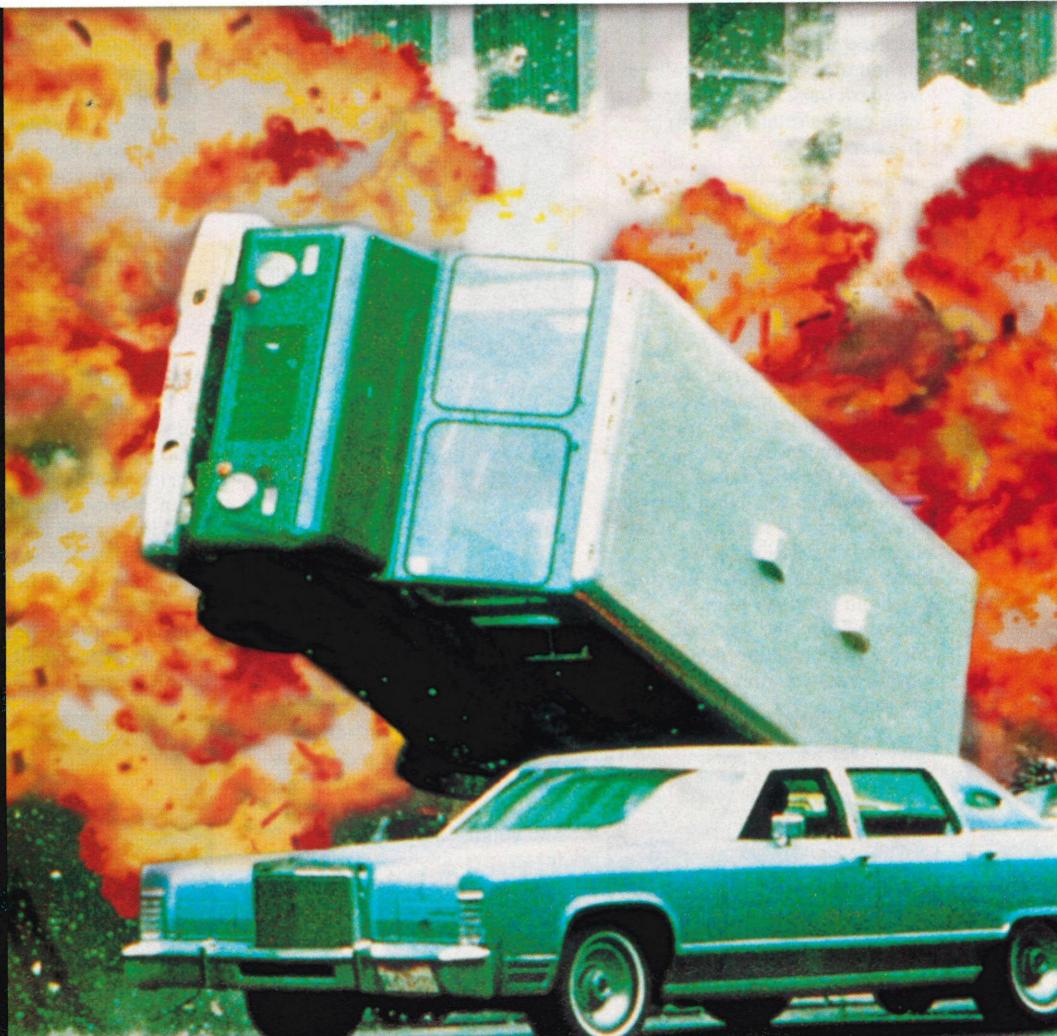
Again, another very easy mission that's just a case search-and-destroy. Having done so, return to Victory and brush up on the following combat run.

MISSION 16**ESCORT CARRIER****Wingman: Vagabond**

Fly the mission before receiving a communication from Admiral Tolwyn. Reply to his questions using the bottom line of dialogue, signing off then talking to Flint in the gunnery control. Talk to Flint using the top line before attending the mission brief.



A
relaxing
Sunday
DRIVE



MISSION 17**DEFEND THE BEHEMOTH****Wingman: Flint**

Scramble all fighters to fight off the incoming Kilrathi fighters. With the threat postponed, return to base and talk to Rollins while taking the lift to the bridge. Once there speak to Admiral Tolwyn, listen to his orders then fly the next mission.

MISSION 18**BOOBY-TRAP****Wingman: Cobra**

The aim of this, the eighteenth mission is to lay mine clusters at four jump points, leaving one open to escape. Manage to do this and you can safely return to the Victory, where the voluptuous Rachel will be waiting on the flight deck. Talk to her, then leave to begin the even tougher nineteenth mission.

MISSION 19**REFUEL THE BEHEMOTH****Wingman: Flash**

The objective of the mission itself is to disable three Kilrathi tankers which can then be used to refuel the Behemoth. Do so, then talk to Vaquero back on the Victory, who can be found waiting in the berths.

MISSION 20**RAID LOKI VI****Wingman: Flint**

The aim of this mission is to destroy the enemy before testing the Behemoth. Having done so and then landed, talk to Rachel on the flight deck before proceeding to the living quarters where Maniac is resting. Talk to him, the chat to Cobra in the berths. Before the next mission you need to speak to both Captain Eisen and Admiral Tolwyn, who can be found in the gunnery control and flight control respectively.

**MISSION 21****PROTECT THE BEHEMOTH****Wingman: Flint**

While the Behemoth unleashes its load on Loki VI your job is to protect short-range Kilrathi fighters. Succeed and then return, speaking to Hobbes in the gunnery control centre.

MISSION 22**KILRAH STRIKE FORCE****Wingman: Flash**

At last, the Terrans get a chance to strike at the Kilrathi homeworld of Kilrah. The objective of the mission is to attack the planet. Survive this monumental mission and you'll be challenged by Prince Thrakath - do not accept the duel. Instead contact the TCS Victory and return to the carrier. Next, watch the scene on the flight deck before scooting up to the bar and talking to Rachel the engineer, using the top dialogue option.

**MISSION 23****VICTORY UNDER ATTACK****Wingman: Flash**

Code Red, the TCS Victory is under attack. Fend off the invading Kilrathi before returning to base, where you should talk to Flint at flight control. Speak to Cobra in the living area, then confront Rollins using the top dialogue line. Shoot up to gunnery control where you'll find Paladin, and when General Taggart interrupts, answer with the bottom reply. Finish the conversation and sit in on the next mission briefing.

MISSION 24**ASTEROID FIELD****Wingman: Maniac**

Clear a path through Asteroid Field for TCS Victory. Succeed and return to the Victory, speaking to Rachel after landing. In the living area talk to Vagabond using the top line of speech. An emergency message will blare through the loudspeakers, and upon arrival at the flight deck you'll find Cobra lying dead on the floor, killed by Hobbes.

Confront Hobbes with the bottom dialogue line, but don't follow the fleeing man-lion. Attend the funeral service on the flight deck, the speak to Captain Eisen in the berths.

**MISSION 25****RESCUE DOCTOR SEVERIN****Wingman: n/a**

Doctor Severin is being held on the prison planet of Alcor IV. To rescue him you'll need to destroy all targets, including buildings, ships and tanks. With the Doc safely aboard, return to the Victory and talk to Rollins with the top dialogue lines. Speak to Maniac in the recreation room, using the bottom reply.

MISSION 26**ELIMINATE KILRATHI****Wingman: Flint**

Kilrathi ships lie in wait at the jump point - to complete the mission you'll need to destroy them. Having done so, return to the Victory and take the elevator to the berths, where you'll find Flint. Talk to her, then speak to Captain Eisen on the bridge, using the bottom line of dialogue. Leave and head for the briefing room.

**MISSION 27****GROUND ASSAULT****Wingman: n/a**

The jump point shield generator must be destroyed, by skimming low of the planet of Freya and avoided the guardian Kilrathi ships. Back aboard the TCS Victory, don't bother wandering around the ship, go straight to the briefing room.

MISSION 28**GUARD JUMP POINT****Wingman: Flint**

Having defend the jump point from Kilrathi invaders, return to base and make your way to the bar. Both Flint and Rachel will be waiting for you, and this is the chance to choose between them. Talk to Rachel using the bottom dialogue line, and reply to Flint with the top answer. You can now pick your girl or, if your heart remains with the Terran ConFed, neither of them. Whatever you selection, prepare for the twenty-ninth mission.

MISSION 29**TESTING TEMPLAR BOMB****Wingman: n/a**

Having flown the mission in which the Templar bomb is tested, talk to Flash who can be found in the berths. Use the top line of speech, before heading off to the bridge to talk to Vaquero. At the gunnery control, talk to Vagabond using the top dialogue line, then leave for the briefing room.

MISSION 30**FLEET ESCORT****Wingman: Flint**

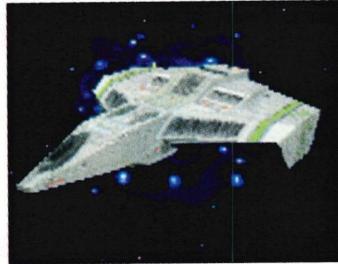
Before flying the mission you'll need to select your ship and its ordnance if you picked Flint as your other half. Having done so, complete this straightforward mission, return to base and prepare for the next.

MISSION 31**GUARD JUMP POINT****Wingman: Flint**

Yet another mission that's just a mad scramble in space. When you return head straight for the briefing room.

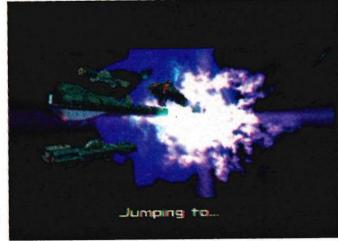
MISSION 32**THE FINAL ASSAULT****Wingmen: Maniac, Flash, Vagabond**

The objective of this, the final mission, is to destroy the Kilrathi homeworld of Kilrah using the Templar bomb. Choose the Excalibur from the ship selection screen, and arm it to the teeth. Leave the victory and tackle the first set of objectives before heading to the first refuelling station, where you should stock up on weapons. Take on the next wave of Kilrathi and re-arm once more, this time strapping the Templar bomb to the underside of the Excalibur. After passing through the first two waypoints order your wingmen back to base. Wait for the fighters to leave, then activate the ship's



cloaking device before selecting the auto-pilot to the next waypoint. Soon two targets appear on your scanner, namely Hobbes and Thrakhath. It's difficult but you must defeat both Kilrathi cats, before diving down towards the planet surface. Skimming across the terrain, activate the cloaking device once more turning to face the waypoint cross hair and kicking in the afterburners. The target is a fault line which is some way off, but this give you time to aim up and deactivate the cloak. Gain a successful lock from the targeting computer and fire off the bomb, before thrusting away to watch Kilrah disintegrate before your very eyes.

Note: For the easiest route through the game you'll need to successfully complete each mission, otherwise Blair is left in some extremely difficult situations.

**BASIC FLYING TECHNIQUES**

We've shown you which decisions to make and where, but what about flying? Sadly it really is up to the piloting skills of the individual, but here are a few pointers for the rookie Wing Commander.

- Make good use of your wingmen. Some of the missions, especially the early ones, can be completed by sitting back and watching your colleagues mop up the Kilrathi fighters. Wingmen are also vital for engaging multiple targets.
- Save missiles for large targets. Lasers are extremely effective against small fighters but larger transport craft

require a couple of well-aimed missile shots before they're destroyed. Also use missile against skilled pilots like Hobbes and Thrakhath.

- Never stay still. It's probably obvious, but a good pilot never flies in straight lines and is always jinking to avoid incoming fire. Also remember to use the afterburners to speed out of tight situations.
- During escort or reconnaissance mission, remember to always fly close to the target otherwise the ship's computer can't identify them otherwise friendly escort ships won't follow your lead.



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Calling all the Heroes

CRASH BANDICOOT



Bonnie Tyler needed a hero and so, it seems, do Sony. So far the PlayStation is devoid of a true game hero but all that is set to change when Crash Bandicoot bursts into the next generation.

We don't need another hero. From Robin Hood to Winston Churchill history has been littered with heroes, some existing purely as legends, the Goliath-slaying David for example, and others just distant memories from days gone by, like John Wayne. There are also the unsung heroes, superstars who haven't been acknowledged for their excellence, like Gazza and, er, Gary Barlow.

Then there are game heroes. A far cry from the champions of legend, most don't have rippling muscles and they aren't noted for being particularly brave or valiant. By all accounts they are misfits who got lucky. Indeed,

where else, apart from the virtual world of a video game, could a dungaree-attired plumber be idolised by millions, or a blue hedgehog loved by kids across the globe?

But right now there's a new kid on the block, another player on the field. Following in the footsteps of PACMAN and other game heroes, American developer Naughty Dog has created what it hopes will become the game hero of the next generation, the PlayStation's answer to Mario and Sonic. His name is Crash Bandicoot, and on the eve of his public debut *PlayStation Plus* scrutinises Sony's marsupial icon and asks the question, "What exactly makes a good game hero?"

CONTINUED OVER

What makes... a good Game Hero?

One of the key factors that makes or breaks a game hero is how instantly recognisable they are. A plumber dressed in dungarees and a bright red sweater isn't the usual hero fare, but he will stand out in a crowd, more so than an ordinary mouse wearing shorts or even a crisp-eating Cheetah. All the popular game icons have been very distinctive, from PACMAN to Sonic the Hedgehog, they are all individual in their appearance. Game heroes also need to be appealing as well as inspiring, to both to kids and the older gamer. Sonic the Hedgehog manages this perfectly because he is both cute but also has enough attitude to make him cool. Other heroes have adopted a similar approach, trying to look hip, but fail dismally mainly because they lack char-

acter. This was an underlying fault with Johnny Bazookatone who is, after all, just the rendered equivalent of Jon Bon Jovi - a bloke with bad hair, shades and a big guitar.

When creating Crash Bandicoot, Naughty Dog carefully avoided this pitfall by making him similar, in many ways, to Sonic. Like Sega's icon, Crash will appeal to younger players as they'll appreciate his cartoon appearance, while the more mature gamer will enjoy his erratic style and Taz-like personality.

But no matter how appealing the character is themselves, without a solid game to support them there's very little chance of capturing the public's imagination. The game therefore needs to be incredibly instinctive, something that Shigeru Miyamoto, the creator of Mario, realised right from the start. Gamers will soon lose interest if controlling Joe Hero is too damn tricky, and likewise the game's appeal will be short lived

if the challenge doesn't get progressively more difficult. It's a very difficult balance to achieve - even Sega had problems with *Sonic the Hedgehog*, which was considered far too easy and linear compared to its arch-rival, *Super Mario World*.

So far the future for Crash Bandicoot is looking very promising indeed. One of the brightest stars at Los Angeles' Electronic Entertainment Expo in May, his popularity is already growing, so much so that even Sony has practically adopted him as one of its own. The reason for this is simple - Crash is, without a doubt, a likable character. While this may account for very little in terms of gameplay, it's enough to get the gamer initially interested. Then, having begun to play the game, players will soon realise that lurking behind the manic mammal is a playable platform game that breaks the mould by entering the third dimension.

The Makers and Breakers

Being a hero isn't easy. There are many who try to capture the public eye but only a select few manage to try to capture the public eye but only a select few manage to succeed.

In almost 20 years of video gaming there are no more than handful of memorable heroes, arguably the most recognisable being Nintendo's moustached icon, Mario. Stealing the limelight 15 years ago after appearing in *Donkey Kong* (who, incidentally, was reborn in 1994 for the release of *Donkey Kong Country*), Mario has since become a household name, starring in countless games (*Super Mario Kart* on the Super Nintendo being the biggest-selling game of all time), spawning endless merchandising and even appearing in his own movie and animated series. Sega responded some

ten years later with Sonic the Hedgehog, the cool blue mammal with an image as sharp as his spikes. Although failing to eclipse Mario in terms of popularity, Sonic is nevertheless a true game hero in his own right, featuring in 12 of his own titles and

also making numerous cameo appearances.

Although nowhere near as big or indeed as popular as Sega and Nintendo's flagship heroes, PACMAN was one of the first heroes to emerge from the video game, along with Miner Willy who debuted back in 1983 in the Spectrum's *Jet Set Willy*. Since then MegaMan has continued to grow in Japan although never pro-

gressed past cult status in this country, and Cool Spot basked in critical acclaim, even if it was for just a brief few minutes.

Of course, the majority of game heroes never reach this level of success and are left by the wayside.

carded in the proverbial gutter and left to gulp whiskey straight from the bottle and dress in tattered clothes that smell of urine. First in the dole queue is Chester Cheetah, the sad crisp-endorser who appeared in an atrocious platform game on the Super Nintendo. Pierre LeChef and Alfred Chicken were two turkeys from *Mindscape*, and although Gremlin

Interactive claimed Zool was the Amiga's rival to Sonic, the ninja from the Nth dimension has been laid to rest along with girlfriend Zooz and pet 'thing', Zoon.

More recent hero wannabes include Rayman and Johnny Bazookatone, both of which lack the characters and attitude of a true hero.

Cheesy the Mouse, Ocean's newly-born rodent star, is another creation that lacks the personality to survive the war of heroes, but then it is an uphill struggle when even Mickey Mouse fails to make any impact on the PlayStation.

On Top of the World

MARIO - TREMENDOUSLY LIKABLE.

Both Mario and Sonic the Hedgehog have enjoyed critical and commercial success as a game hero, mainly because both characters are instantly recognisable and are tremendously appealing. It also helps that both have been supported by strong games.

Sonic - APPEALING TO BOTH KIDS AND ADULTS.

In the Gutter

JOHNNY BAZOOKATONE - THE RENDERED EQUIVALENT OF JON BON JOVI.

There are far more who have failed though, from Chester Cheetah on the Super Nintendo to some of the PlayStation's underachievers, like Johnny Bazookatone and Rayman. Their lack of character isn't helped by the fact that they star in particularly average platform games.

BUBSY THE BOBCAT - THIRD TIME LUCKY WITH BUBSY 3D?

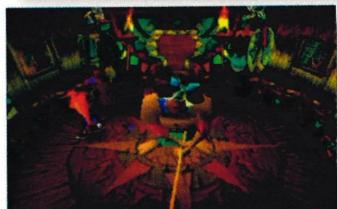
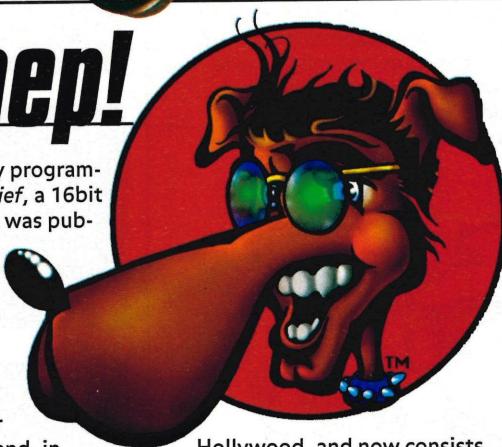
Get down, Shep!

Naughty Dog was formed just over a decade ago, formed by partners Andy Gavin and Jason Rubin. The two originally met at junior school, programming educational software for the handicapped, and turned to games during high school. Under the name of Naughty Dog, the pair's first published game was *Ski Crazed* for the Apple II, distributed by Baudville. Naughty Dog then went on to release the first ever VGA adventure, *Dream Zone*, which was developed from practically every major format including the PC, Amiga and the Atari ST.

Gavin and Rubin then moved into college where they kept the

company alive by programming *Keef the Thief*, a 16bit adventure which was published by Electronic Arts across the globe. Naughty Dog then ventured onto the console, coding *Ring of Power* for the Mega Drive and, in 1993, *Way of the Warrior* for the 3DO. *Way of the Warrior* was the very first fighting game for the system and, due to its success, helped attract the attention of Universal Studios Interactive. Having signed a three-project deal the company moved to Universal Studio's backlog in

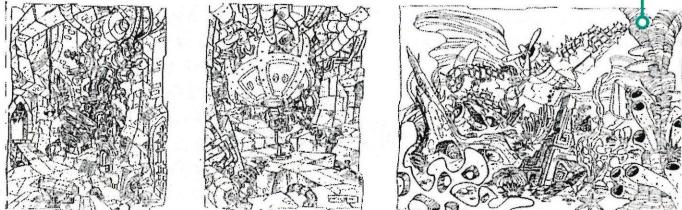
Hollywood, and now consists of seven programmers and designers, focusing their effort on producing the very best software for 32bit systems. *Crash Bandicoot* is the company's first major project for Universal and, with this as a starting block, the future can only get better.



CRASH BANDICOOT IN ACTION.



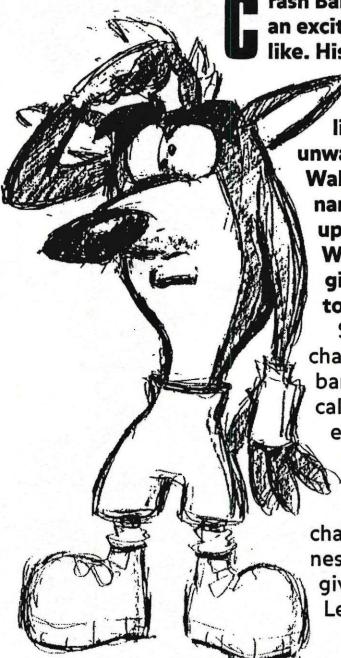
PREPARATORY SKETCHES OF ONE OF THE GAME'S LATER LEVELS.



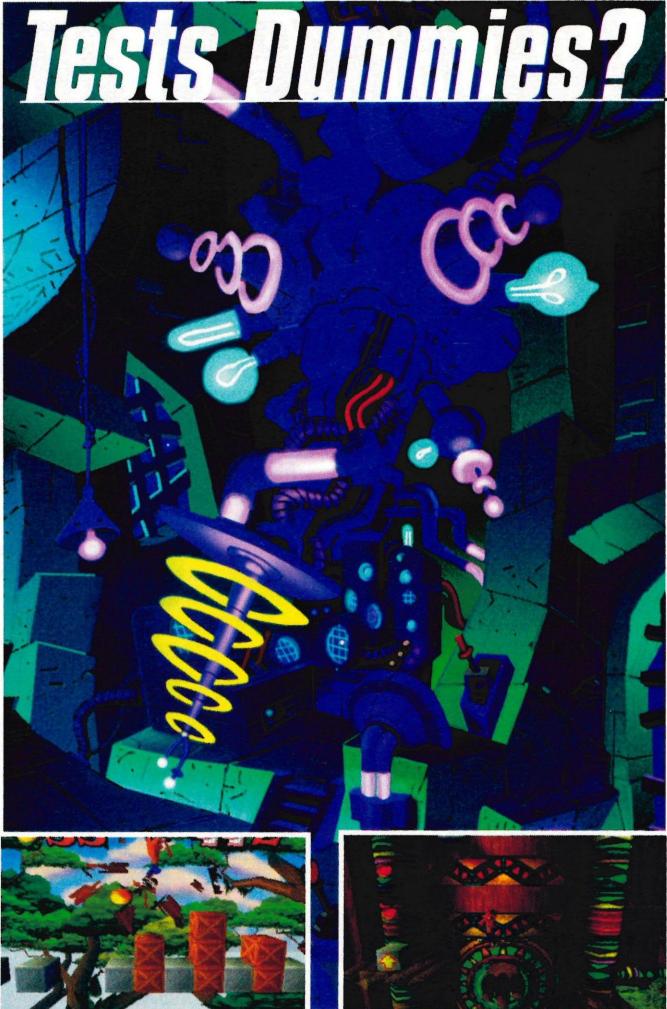
Crash, Bang, Wallop!

Crash Bandicoot hasn't always enjoyed such an exciting name - it's his stage-name if you like. His real name, or at least his working title, is so much more embarrassing, like having middle name like Leslie or Ely. Obviously an unwanted child, he was originally called Wally the Wombat. Oh dear. Whereas a name like Sonic the Hedgehog conjures up images of a super-fast spiky hero, Wally the Wombat is more like a name given to a bumbling idiot who's prone to walking into walls!

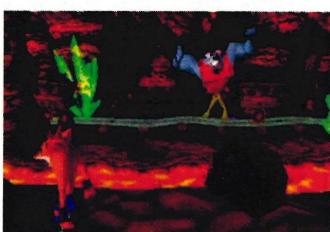
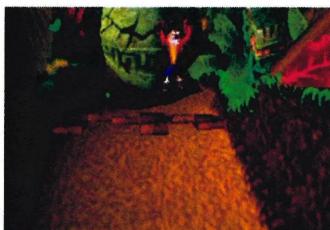
Since his conception Crash has changed, albeit only from wombat to bandicoot rather than his actual physical appearance and has evolved differently from his quadruped cousins - standing on his hind feet and wearing shorts, sneakers and fingerless gloves. His facial expression has also changed to one of uncontrollable wildness, his crazed eyes and beaming grin giving him a look closer to Hannibal Lector than Sonic the Hedgehog.



Tests Dummies?



Fantasy Islands



CRASH IS A TRUE 3D SPRITE, AND INTERACTS WITH THE BACKDROPS BEAUTIFULLY. HIS SPINNING ATTACK IS USED TO SEE OFF ONCOMING FOES, AND OTHER SCENES SEE HIM RIDING BOARS AND AVOIDING SPIKED TRAPS.

While Crash Bandicoot may be a cool character but without a decent game to support his slick persona, he'd be left to scour the gutter with Rayman and Johnny Bazookatone. Thanks to years of experience in the video game industry Naughty Dog has realised gameplay is all important and as well focusing on instinctiveness, variety is also a key factor in the game. As a result *Crash Bandicoot*, the game, is divided into two very distinct styles. Primarily as a platform game, it's packed with just under thirty massive levels, some of which scroll from left to right and others that are three dimensional.

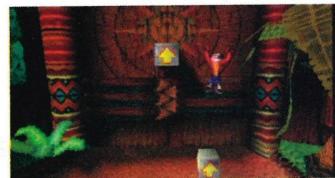
Drawing inspiration from the likes of *Super Mario World* and *Sonic the Hedgehog* as well as other, lesser known titles, *Crash Bandicoot* is a classic example of the platform game at its very best. Slipping inside the sneak-



THE PRE-RENDERED ROOMS ARE FULLY LIGHT-SOURCED.

ers of Crash himself, the aim of the game is negotiate the twenty-odd levels before facing his the manic-marsupial's arch-enemy, Doctor Neo Cortex. Of course, there are many obstacles to overcome along the way, including the obligatory boss characters and a variety of background traps, but what makes *Crash Bandicoot* different from every other PlayStation platform is its variety. Admittedly, the 2D levels are pretty much

standard fare, with Crash screaming from left to right, spinning on the enemies' heads to defeat them. However, the 3D stages are far more interesting, with Crash moving in and out of the screen as well as dodging left and right to avoid incoming obstacles. Crash is free to roam the rendered backgrounds, either following the level into the screen or running out towards the player, often chased by massive rolling boulders in a humorous spoof of the opening scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.



Learning from *Super Mario World*, another aspect Naughty Dog concentrated on was making sure each level was varied, both in terms of gameplay as well as graphical style. The company has managed to pull this off with relative ease, with both the 2D and 3D levels as well as the plethora of scenarios across which Crash journeys.

The game opens on South Sanity Island, an isle ripe with dense forest and sun-bleached beaches. Crash, washed up on the sandy shores of the island, must avoid obstacles such as pits and spiked logs while stomping on crabs before entering the jungle. Having hacked through the treacherous undergrowth he eventually arrives in a jungle village filled with unhappy natives led by level boss Koala Kong.

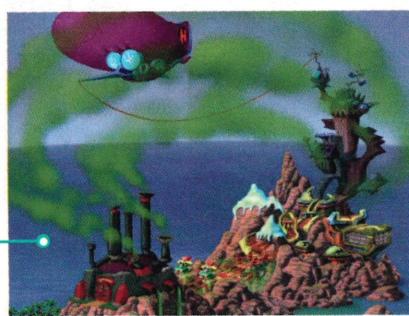
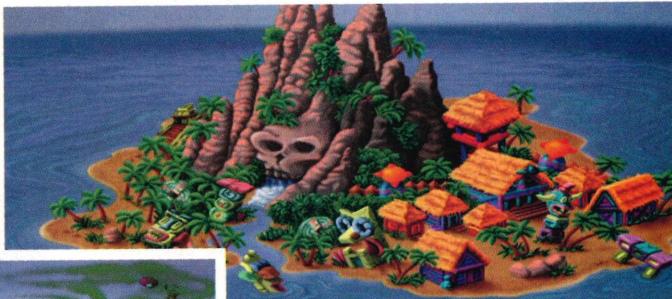
The second section, Mid Sanity Island, offers more of the same although Crash must defeat Ripper Roo before leaving for North Sanity Island, a once-beautiful land devastated by industrial development. Forced to battle through a grimy power plant infested by malfunctioning

robots and lethal obstructions such as falling planks and red-hot steam jets.

Eventually Crash will reach Castle Cortex, the hideout of super-villain Neo Cortex. Neo is protected by a seemingly endless stream of creatures warped by his evil Cortex Vortex gun. By smashing through the mutant army Crash eventually faces Cortex himself in what promises to be an electric climax.

Many of the levels are set against a tight time limit, leaving Crash no other option but to run like crazy and avoid the oncoming obstacles, while other stages are more relaxed and give the player chance to explore for valuable power-ups. In addition to the numerous 'standard' levels there are also bonus stages which are access by grabbing the various bonus icons scattered throughout the game.

THE ISLANDS ARE RENDERED AFFAIRS, AND ROTATE AS CRASH MAKES HIS WAY FROM ONE TO THE OTHER.



CRASH'S PROGRESS AROUND THE ISLAND IS DETAILED BY A YELLOW LINE THAT EXTENDS UP AND DOWN THE ASSORTED VALLEYS AND PITS AS THE LEVELS ARE COMPLETED. THE GAME ALSO FEATURES A HANDFUL OF SECRET WORLDS, BUT THEIR WHEREABOUTS IS SHROUDED IN SECRECY.



NEO CORTEX



NITRUS BRIOS

Heroes and Villains

Batman is backed by Robin, Mario could rely on Luigi and Sonic had Tails. No matter how hard a hero is, they always need a sidekick to rely on. Crash Bandicoot is no exception, helped by a handful of friends through his journey. However, Crash's enemies far outweigh his aides, the bad guys lead by super-villains Doctor Neo Cortex...

NEO CORTEX

Doctor Neo Cortex is a social outcast, a misfit who'd put Jarvis Cocker to shame. Ever since he was born he has been humiliated by mankind and now, after years of slap-head gags he has decided to fight back. A brilliant scientist, Cortex has created the Evolv-O-Ray, a powerful weapon that can transform even the most intellectually-lacking thickie into a supremely intelligent super-being within seconds. Neo's plan to use the weapon to create an all-powerful army doesn't quite succeed and he's left with a motley crew of deformed failures with which to take over the world. Will he succeed?

NITRUS BRIOS

Neo Cortex's right-hand man, Nitrus Brio is also a great scientist. Completely devoid of human emotion he is, if you will, the Spock to Cortex's Captain Kirk. Brio helped developed the Evolv-O-Ray and is a master of mutation to the extent that he has developed a potion which, when drunk, transforms the victim into an uncontrollable monster. Hmmm, sounds like he's discovered Diamond White...

TAWNA

The voluptuous Tawna is Crash's dream-date. Combining beauty with brains, she is one of the few success stories of the Evolv-O-Ray and spends a great deal of her time trying to convince Cortex's mutated mob to revolt against the psychotic megalomaniac.

AKU AKU

Aside from Tawna, Aku Aku is Crash's only other ally during his battle against Cortex. The native witch doctor of the tribe who inhabit the Sanity Islands,

Aku Aku is willing to join Crash's plight simply because Cortex is ruining the islands by pumping noxious chemicals into the environment. Although speaking in weird mumbo-jumbo, Crash manages to translate the handy clues Aku Aku gives throughout the game.

RIPPER ROO

The result of the first Cortex Vortex experiment, Ripper Roo changed from a care-free wallaby into a ravenous kangaroo. Ripper Roo is one of the toughest challenges Crash will faces, and slashes his opponents with lethal razor-sharp claws. Eek.

KOALA KONG

Koala Kong is a case of brawn over brains. Mutated from a koala through the Evolv-O-Ray, this muscular beast is mother nature's equivalent of Sylvester Stallone: tough, strong and thick as shit.

KIMONO AND KIMODO

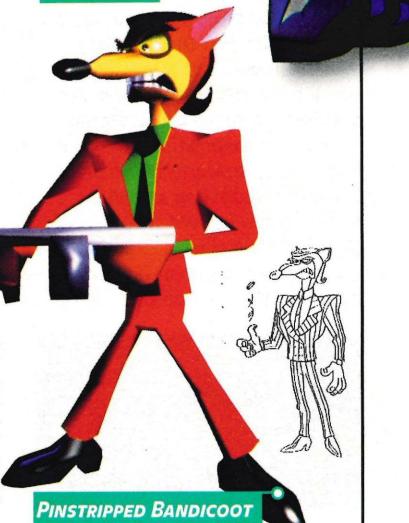
A tag-team of mutated Kimono dragons, Kimono is the brains of the outfit while Kimodo provides the brawn. Equipped with huge samurai swords the brothers Dragon believe they're martial arts experts. If truth be told, they're better as chop suey than karate chop.

PINSTRIPED BANDICOOT

This slick-haired mobster is the animal world's equivalent of Marlon Brando's Godfather. The Evolv-O-Ray has transformed him into a vicious gangster who has pledged his loyalty to Neo Cortex, and uses his Tommy Gun against all nonbelievers such as Crash.



RIPPER ROO



PINSTRIPPED BANDICOOT



KIMONO AND KIMONO



KOALA KONG

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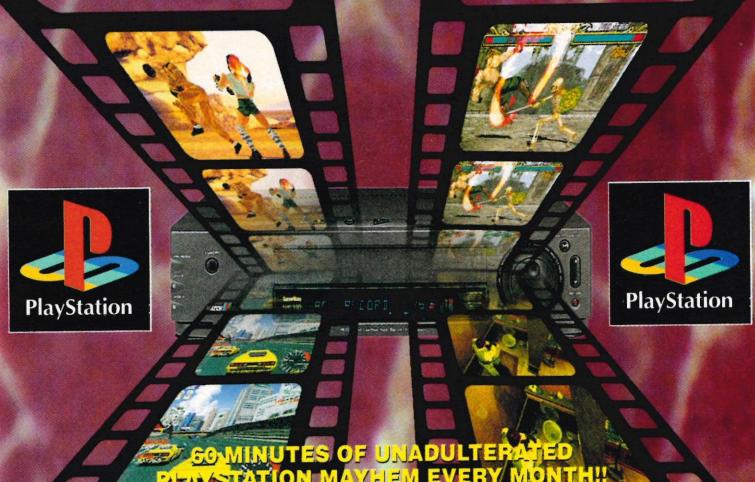
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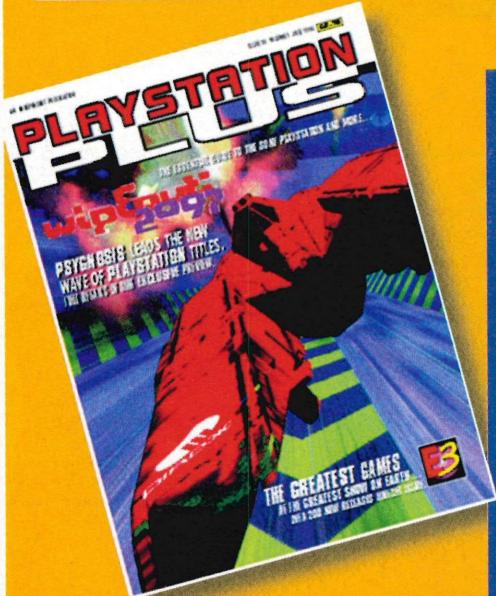
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RETRO ROCKETMAN

Tomorrow I shall be buying the first *Namco Museum* package, and personally, I can't wait to play *PACMAN* and *Galaga* again. To release these old arcade games in their original form, with information about the games' design and promotional material is a godsend.

What I wanted to know is: are other companies such as Capcom, Data East, Taito, Jaleco and SNK joining Namco, Williams and Irem and re-releasing old games like *Bionic Commando*, *Arkanoid* and *PACmania* to name but a few of a very, very long list. I know some people might ask 'Who needs old games?' but let me tell you a few facts. When the arcade games were converted onto the 8bit and 16bit computers/consoles, they were often criticised for not being arcade perfect – look at *Bomb Jack* on the C64 and Gameboy. Now we have a system which will give you a true conversion, or in the case of Williams, the original code. Also, dedicated gamers will fork out £150 for a Super Gun so that they can link up the original PCBs and play games like *Double Dragon* and *Dragon Ninja*. These PCBs

don't come cheap – they cost between £25 and £300. Put six on a CD for £40, and you can save hundreds.

Thirdly, these games will last. After buying a PlayStation on December 20th, I have eight games in my collection and so far I have completed six of them, most of them a few days after purchase (*Ridge Racer* completed in five days, *Loaded* 16 days, *Alien Trilogy* 11 days and *Doom* 28 days). Out of all of these, and I'm not saying I didn't have fun playing them, *Rapid Reload* is the longest lasting game in my collection. I haven't used any of the continues given and have only used up one life per game. I don't object to paying £45 for a game that lasts more than two months and that's where these compilation packs succeed. When you play *Alien Trilogy* or *Loaded*, you have a set goal. Complete that goal and you're treated to an end of game sequence and that's about it! Game over. The beauty of games like *Defender*, *PACMAN*, *Mappy* and *Joust* is that there is no end game sequence – you just keep trying to beat your previous highest score. These games may not look as pretty as *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken*, but they will definitely last longer.

Mark Hogg, Derby

Congratulations on a top article *The Future is History* in the June edition assessing whether collections of classic games, such as the *Namco Museum* disks, were worth our dosh. However, a question which no one seems to have asked is why do software houses, such as Namco, only release old games from their own back catalogues? Wouldn't it be so much better (ie better value, better games) if these companies got together and released nostalgia disks featuring the best of past games regardless of who made them? Just imagine, wouldn't it be great to have such a disk containing *PACMAN*, *Defender*, *Gorf*, *Space Invaders* etc? We could be spared the naff games always present in any compilation and would probably be prepared to



pay the full £40 for a top collection.

On a separate topic, I recently rushed out and bought a copy of *Alien Trilogy* after reading a very favourable review in your mag. When I got the game I noticed that your review rating was used on its cover and that there was also a tie-in discount voucher giving money off the next purchase of *PlayStation Plus*. Furthermore, other games which have received good reviews are using your ratings on their covers to sell them eg *Descent* (90%). Does this mean that *PlayStation Plus* is giving good reviews to secure corporate deals or have I been watching too many conspiracy-theory episodes of the *X-Files*? Jamie Finch, e-Mail

Yes, I rather think you have! Seriously, if a company is pleased as punch to quote reviews and/or scores (a fairly standard practice across books, videos, games, movie posters, CDs etc), we're not going to argue. It's good publicity for us. Acclaim approached us regarding *Alien Trilogy* with the voucher idea because we'd enjoyed the game. Rest assured, the review came before the voucher.



NEVER MIND THE SOFTWARE...

The software price argument seems to be in full swing now, but, hey, what about the hardware price?

With no price cuts announced, I happily played on my newly acquired PlayStation until I saw an advert for PlayStations at £197 – saving £100, etc.

To say I'm annoyed is an understatement. A reduction of £100 at the drop of a hat is a kick in the teeth for existing customers, especially those like myself who've only just bought their machine. A moderate cut we could live with, but to lose £100 for the sake of waiting a month is a bit hard to swallow.

I appreciate Sony's need to remain competitive against stiff competition, but surely they should be selling the PlayStation on merit rather than just price. As this happens with every new machine launched in this industry, the day could come when nobody will buy anything, fearing a massive price reduction is on the way. Sony could easily reward all their faithful customers who paid the original price. Everyone must have sent in their registration card that came with their machine, so how about some money-off vouchers, or a free game to compensate us? I feel it's the least they could do, after all, it's us who've put Sony on the gaming map.

P Mason, Merseyside

Being a sad old person, I can clearly remember when the domestic video recorder came out. Over a grand and then down to £600 in less than a year. Within two more years, down to £300. Huge price cuts within eighteen months of a new piece of technology's

FAQ

The most frequently asked questions of the month are, once again, met with straight answers.

There are some nasty stories circulating that the PAL version of Capcom's Resident Evil is going to be cut to shreds. Can you confirm the stories that the blood in the UK game will be green and that the intro sequence has been severely trimmed back?

Due to its contentious nature, *Resident Evil* was always going to have problems with its gore. However, to be fair to Virgin they have got a UK version of the game as complete as possible. The introductory sequence is the most obvious area where cuts have been made. As the group of S.T.A.R.S members leg it to the house in the FMV sequence, the vicious attack has been trimmed slightly, with the scene where a dismembered hand (still attached to a gun) has been altered so the severed wrist is never seen. Similarly, the linking scenes within the game itself have been cut slightly, most notably when Chris or Jill find the first dead member of their team. In the Japanese game, the decapitated head rolls across the floor as the zombie turns, but this is not the case in the PAL game. As for the rumours regarding the green blood in the PAL version, it was an avenue that Virgin were looking into, but the general feel is that it would negate the effect of the gore, so the red spatters remain.

What has happened to William Arcade Classics?

It was delayed, but is out now.

With so many good films emerging this summer, game licences seem a little thin on the ground. What film-based games are on the cards, or are people preferring to concentrate on original titles instead?

Licenced titles aren't as popular as in the 16bit machines' heyday, but the PlayStation is still set to play host to a number of film-based games this year. Ocean have got a game based on Arnie's *Eraser*, Psygnosis have opted for the arty *City of Lost Children*, and Acclaim have games based on both *Batman Forever* and *Batman and Robin*. Similarly, Fox have the rights to what must be the greatest film of the year, *Independence Day*, which takes the form of a shoot 'em up due for release nearer Christmas. Of course, a lot of companies had their fingers burnt with costly licence failures during the end of the 16bit reign, so that could also explain the reluctance to commit extra money to games that already take eighteen months to develop — that and the lack of available footage at the start of development.

debut is nothing new. Sadly, it's economics and once something has successfully established itself in the marketplace, it attracts even more buyers by dropping the price.

BUT DOES IT WORK?

I have recently bought a copy of *Street Fighter Alpha* after your exuberant review a few months back. And as you said, the graphics are really smart, the music is excellent and the gameplay spot-on. All in all, it is a superb game. Except...

The loading time is absolutely atrocious. As a programmer (admittedly not of PlayStation games) I would love to 'hadoken' the involved parties! You have to sit there and stare eagerly at a black screen with those two catchy words 'Now Loading....' while the intro loads, then while the character selection loads, then while the game section loads and then while the winner sequence loads. Quite how Capcom, Virgin Interactive or Sony thought it acceptable I don't know. Maybe the Japanese are a patient lot but crikey, this is ridiculous! Having compared the game with a colleague's Saturn equivalent, the PlayStation version takes approximately 25% longer to load. However, in both cases this could have been dramatically reduced. For instance, the intro sequence is loaded into memory and automatically executed with the music being the only thing streamed off the CD. What they ought to have done was either rendered the intro sequence or made a movie section and streamed the lot off the CD.

But the worst crime is that having loaded the intro into memory, after it is executed, if the Start button is not pressed they then load it all in again, and then again, and again... etc. Honestly!! I only hope that future sprite intensive games don't suffer in this manner or we may end up begging for a cartridge add-on!!!

Charles Thornhill, e-mail

In Issue 9, Eddie Lowden of Glasgow had an unwell machine. Well, I'm afraid, it's catching — my PlayStation is sick too. *Tekken* is the worst game to load, but so, me days any game just won't load. It mainly happens when I've had the console on for some time, but not always. Crashing is a regular problem, which is very frustrating when you're on the harder levels of *Magic Carpet*. You get a couple of hours into playing a level, then crash! Everything freezes. I am going to send it back but, as with Eddie, it means being without it for some time. Let us know, Eddie, how you get on and how long it took it repair, and then I'll return mine.

Adel Broadhead, Leeds

I am concerned about a problem that I have experienced with my PlayStation. I purchased one on the day it was released and initially, had no problems with it. However, two months on, problems began to occur. I purchased a PAL *Air Combat*. The FMV sequences were disjointed — the graphics and sound stopped and started, resulting in a jerky sequence. After exchanging the game twice, the problem still occurred, so I assumed it was poor programming on the part of Namco. Unfortunately at Christmas I had the same problem with the FMV sequences on *FIFA '96*, *Tekken* and *Warhawk*. I was able to swap my PlayStation for another one at the shop I originally purchased it from. My second PlayStation, at the time of writing, is working fine (touch wood). But I know that these problems were not a one-off. I worked at a computer shop until recently,

and met a number of customers who have encountered the same problems. This problem needs to be investigated, especially when you consider my second concern.

If you do have problems and your guarantee has exhausted, then your problems are only beginning. According to the Sony Customer Service Line, repairing a PlayStation out of guarantee will cost £94.99!! On top of this, you will have to wait three months for it to be repaired and returned! In comparison, repairing a Sega Saturn will cost between £50-£55 and will take three weeks to repair and return. I do not expect to have an out-of-guarantee machine repaired for free, but surely it ought to be half the cost I was quoted.

Alasdair Brownsword, Sheffield

So, I rang Sony and asked the same sort of question. Maybe I was lucky, but as well as being polite and friendly, they said that until they'd seen a problem, they couldn't give an exact quote, but between £75 and £95 was about average and it would probably take between four to six weeks to get it sorted and back to me.

THE LAST WORD ON...

Of course magazine game reviews are subjective, what was Simon Trenerry's problem (*Plus Points*, Issue 8)? Personally, I cannot stand *Tekken*, yet all the reviews gave it 90% or above. But I recognise that this is personal taste, rather than absolute fact. I would prefer to take my motorbike out every day rather than play *WipeOut*, but stick *Xevious* on my PlayStation and I'm there for hours, despite the fact that it's thirteen years old!

I agree that *Worms* may not have huge sprites, or push the PlayStation to its limits, but it's still one of the most consistently entertaining games created on any platform. According to Simon's judgements, it seems that *Lemmings* should never have been released, or *Tetris*, *Defender*, *X-Com* etc. *Worms'* graphics, while small, are highly detailed. You can see shotgun cartridges being ejected, the barrels of the minigun spinning and the changes of attire for drilling, cutting, fireballing etc. I wonder if his dislike stems from the fact that the game requires considerably more cerebral input than the average shoot 'em up or beat 'em up, just to fire a vaguely accurate shot, never mind the tactical and strategic play required. Yes, it is tricky at first and yes, CPU worms are extremely efficient shots. I've played *Worms* with most of my friends and have yet to find anyone who didn't enjoy it. Hell's teeth, even my Mum played and laughed! A four-player game, with a couple of dozen cans of beer, is an great way to pass an evening. And when you drop a banana bomb down a tunnel to land on your mate's last worm, your exultant cries of joy will shake the windows. On the other hand, if you believe a PlayStation is only about large graphics and vast quantities of colour and sound, sell it and buy a video recorder.

Derek Richardson, Musselburgh



NEXT MONTH

we have the first preview of EA's forthcoming helicopter epic, *Soviet Strike*.

From the same stable that wowed 16bit owners with *Jungle* and *Desert Strike*, *Soviet Strike* is without a doubt one of the hottest games of the year.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE



And if that wasn't enough, we'll also have previews of *Rainbow Islands*, *Tenka*, the first pictures of *FIFA '97*, while *Tunnel B1*, *Crash Bandicoot* and *Overkill* are lining up for the review treatment.

So make sure you reserve your copy of *PlayStation Plus*, or it'll be tears before bedtime.

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